Strategic Initiatives

Summative Evaluation of the Labour Market Information — British Columbia

Final Report

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Executive Summary

Overview of the Labour Market Information Strategic Initiative

In August 1995, the Province of British Columbia and the Federal Government entered into the Labour Market Strategic Initiatives Agreement to test approaches to social security reform in British Columbia in the areas of employment, learning and education, income security and services, as part of the Strategic Initiatives Program.

The Labour Market Information (LMI) Strategic Initiative was one of the joint initiatives carried out by the governments of Canada and British Columbia under the Labour Market Strategic Initiatives Agreement. The objective of the LMI Strategic Initiative was: "*to answer the need for the development, production and distribution of high quality job and career related labour market information and, particularly, its integration into career counselling in secondary and post-secondary educational settings, in order to support the school-to-work transition*"[1]. The Initiative addressed this objective by focusing on the development and dissemination of LMI resources for career development purposes, with career practitioners as the primary audience. Many of the resources created by the Initiative, although aimed at career practitioners, were also intended to be used by end-users, often with the assistance of career practitioners.

The Joint Committee on Enhanced Labour Market Information provided overall direction for the LMI Strategic Initiative. The composition of the committee was intended to provide a broad range of input into the planning of the activities of the Initiative and included federal and provincial personnel who collect, disseminate or use LMI, as well as career practitioners from the field. The federal-provincial co-chairs of the Joint Committee made the final funding decisions. In addition to the Joint Committee, there were sub-committees that oversaw planning for each activity area. There were five main activity areas for the LMI Strategic Initiative:

- Research and data development: to develop new sources of labour market data for use in career-related labour market information products and services;
- New and enhanced information products: to produce and distribute new career-related labour market information products, using existing or new sources of labour market information;
- Community-based information partnerships: to pilot test selected community-based projects, in collaboration with community or sectoral agencies;

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1 *Cooperation Agreement Concerning the Labour Market Components of the Canada British Columbia Strategic Initiatives*, Schedule C, 1995.

- Implementation of new technologies: to test the relative merits of alternative delivery mechanisms and technologies for the dissemination of labour market information in schools, community agencies, homes and government offices; and

- Quality standards and training: research to develop standards for training of career practitioners and quality standards (currency, accuracy, etc.) for the development of labour market information, as well as pilot testing training approaches and strategies for delivering training.

Through the Labour Market Strategic Initiatives Agreement, the governments of Canada and British Columbia provided contribution funding of approximately $8,210,000 for the Labour Market Information Strategic Initiative for the period from 1995/96 to 1998/99. Each funding partner also spent additional funds on administration costs, translations and other related expenses.

About 100 projects were funded by the LMI Strategic Initiative. Projects are defined as publications, community-based initiatives, websites, research documents, resource listings and guides, inventories and annotated listings of available sources of labour market information. Also included are brochures, displays, marketing, standards and training activities. These projects resulted in:

- the production and distribution of 26 LMI print resources, including updating and reprinting four of the print resources;
- the development and distribution of six facilitator's guides and lesson plans;
- the on-line mounting of 31 resources, including three editions of *Career Paths*;
- the creation or support for the development of 12 websites, including *BC WorkInfoNet*, various local websites, Community Skills Centres websites and industry-specific and special interest websites;
- the creation of five CD ROMs for various audiences, such as *Career Gateways*, and *Xplore Science Careers*;
- the development and distribution of seven resource guides, annotated listings and inventories, including the brochure *"What's Key in Labour Market Information"*;
- the production of 17 research papers, models and databases; and
- the delivery of 32 public forums, workshops and training sessions throughout the province, including 22 community-based LMI seminars in the spring of 1998.

Evaluation Purpose and Methodology

The summative evaluation of the LMI Strategic Initiative reported here was conducted to assess the impacts and effects of the Initiative and to determine whether it had achieved its objectives.

Since the focus of the Initiative had been on addressing the needs of career practitioners, the views of career practitioners were a major focus for the evaluation. The primary data collection component entailed a combination of faxed surveys and telephone interviews of 150 people, including career practitioners who provide assistance to individuals doing

career planning, and analysts and program planners who are involved in the collection, dissemination and/or use of labour market information for planning of employment and education programs. Career practitioners included:

- classroom teachers in secondary schools teaching grade 11 and/or 12 students in the Career and Personnel Planning program;
- counselors providing career counselling to post-secondary students;
- career practitioners who work for not-for-profit and private agencies providing career development services to employment insurance recipients on contract to HRDC, and/or to income assistance recipients on contract to the MAETT; and
- provincial and federal employees who work in the field providing services to clients of MAETT, or HRDC, respectively.

A second component was a survey of end-users, including secondary students, income assistance and employment insurance recipients doing career planning with a federal or provincial contractor, and post-secondary students. In addition, case studies of 15 projects carried out through the LMI Strategic Initiative were conducted.

Case Studies

Each case study consisted of a profile of a project, or set of related projects that were funded by the Initiative. The profiles provide illustrations of some of the impacts of the projects, both large and small. In some cases, the impacts are local, as the project is only intended to have a local impact. In other cases, the impacts are much broader in scope. The profiles illustrate some of the challenges faced in carrying out projects of this nature, and some of the lessons learned in doing so. A description of each of the 15 projects is provided in this report as well as a synthesis of the lessons learned from the case studies about collecting LMI, and producing and disseminating LMI resources. A complete profile of each of the 15 projects is provided in a separate volume, *The Summative Evaluation of the Labour Market Information Strategic Initiative: Profiles of Selected Projects.*

Lessons Learned

As a Strategic Initiatives Program, the LMI Strategic Initiative was to test and evaluate innovative and cost-effective ways of addressing its objectives to learn what works and what doesn't. A wealth of lessons about collecting LMI, and producing and disseminating LMI resources have been learned from the activities of the Initiative and have been captured in this evaluation.

One of the key lessons of the Initiative as a whole was the value of working in partnership. The value of partnerships was frequently mentioned by respondents when citing benefits of the Initiative, or lessons learned from carrying out individual projects. The LMI Strategic Initiative itself was a federal-provincial partnership. The implementation of the Initiative took the partnership concept further by setting up its activities and delivery processes to involve both those who collect and/or disseminate LMI, and as career

practitioners, the primary audience for the resources produced by the Initiative. A number of benefits of working in partnership were identified by respondents, including:

- improved understanding of the needs of users;
- more cost-effective approaches to addressing needs;
- reduced overlap or duplication with other projects;
- sharing of resources, either in-kind or financial;
- sharing of knowledge about collecting, producing and disseminating labour market information; and
- creation of more user-friendly LMI resources.

Another benefit is that working in partnership is one way that lessons learned from other projects can be shared with other collectors, producers or disseminators of labour market information. Another lesson about partnerships is the amount that can be achieved with a relatively small amount of funding through the cooperation and dedication of those involved. None the less, some funding is needed for partnerships to happen. Partnerships only exist to achieve some end and money is needed to do this. With the end of the LMI Strategic Initiative, Initiative funding has ended. Any ongoing work in this area is funded either out of operating budgets or through new funding sources. Hence, money for carrying out LMI projects has been greatly reduced, and with the reduction in funding has come a concomitant reduction in the amount of partnering occurring in this area.

Chapter 2 provides a synthesis of the lessons learned from individual projects that were profiled for the case studies. Other key lessons learned through the activities of the LMI Strategic Initiative as a whole are provided in the final chapter of the report.

Summary of Key Findings and Conclusions

The LMI Strategic Initiative resulted in the creation and dissemination of a wealth of LMI resources, in both print and electronic form. To encourage the effective use of these resources, it developed facilitators' guides and provided workshops and training on the use of a number of LMI resources. To improve the capacity for the collection of local or sector LMI, and the development and dissemination of LMI resources, it funded a number of pilot projects in communities throughout BC that resulted in other resources.

The Initiative made LMI resources available to their intended audiences by widespread distribution of free print copies, and by creating internet or CD ROM versions of a number of resources. In addition, the Initiative established the *BC WorkInfoNet* website, which provides links to a wide range of LMI resources, including ones created by the Initiative as well as many others.

The evaluation found that awareness of LMI and its uses was good and has been growing. The intended audiences for the resources produced by the Initiative were, to a considerable extent, getting and using the resources intended for them, although the use of specific resources varied depending on the resource and the audience. The biggest users of LMI resources were career practitioners who work directly with clients, particularly

government contractors. The range of resources developed by the Initiative met the needs of a diverse range of intended users. The needs of end-users, however, were not met to the same degree as were the needs of career practitioners, analysts and planners. This difference perhaps reflects the fact that career practitioners were the primary audience for the activities of the Initiative, not end-users.

Among all the activities of the Initiative, and all the products and resources created, four stand out as key resources because they address the needs of a broad range of users: *Work Futures, the BC WorkInfoNet website, Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information*, and *A Guide to the BC Economy and Labour Market*. It is noteworthy that all four were produced early in the course of the Initiative. Resources produced near the end of the Initiative may, or may not, turn out to be just as useful, but at the time of this evaluation they were not in widespread use. It may be that time was the issue. Before people can make effective use of a new resource, they need to spend some time learning how to use it. But lack of time was an issue for many respondents, who felt they did not have time to learn how to use the resources.

The evaluation examined the extent to which the LMI Strategic Initiative achieved its objectives of:

- improving labour market information products and services to better meet the needs of a diverse range of users;
- increasing access to labour market information resources that meet the needs of a diverse range of users;
- enhancing coordination in the development, production and dissemination of labour market information; and
- increasing integration of labour market information into career planning and decision making.

With respect to the first objective, improving LMI products and services, the evaluation detected improvement in the quality of labour market information and improvement in the products and services to better meet the needs of a diverse range of users. The evidence suggests that the LMI Strategic Initiative made a significant contribution to the improved quality of labour market information, including outcome and student flow information, and made some contribution to increasing the amount and type of community and sector level labour market information. The LMI Strategic Initiative did, therefore, achieve its objective of improving labour market information products and services to better meet the needs of a diverse range of users.

Regarding increased access, the LMI Strategic Initiative increased the availability of labour market information resources to meet the needs of a diverse range of users, by:

- producing resources in a variety of formats, such as print, CD ROM and internet;
- creating different resources to make LMI accessible to different users;
- promoting the resources to audiences of career practitioners and other users;

- making a large number of LMI resources available on the internet through one site, the *BC WorkInfoNet* website; and
- distributing LMI resources free of charge to a wide audience of intended users.

Through increasing availability, the LMI Strategic Initiative increased access to a wide range of LMI resources for intended users. None the less, users still experienced some difficulties in access because they lacked information about some of the resources, how to obtain them, and how they can be used effectively. In addition, barriers to access still exist for people with disabilities.

The Initiative enhanced coordination in the development, production and dissemination of labour market information by:

- providing effective communication to ensure those involved and other producers of LMI were informed about the Initiative's activities and plans;
- facilitating cooperation and collaboration and establishing effective partnerships for the collection and dissemination of LMI; and
- avoiding duplication in the collection and dissemination of LMI.

In fact, the Initiative's effectiveness in establishing partnerships is viewed as one of its key benefits, in addition to the range of useful resources it created.

To address the fourth objective, increasing the integration of labour market information into career planning and decision making, the Initiative attempted to make sure intended users knew how to use the resources by developing various training manuals and facilitator's guides and by providing training on how to use LMI. As a result, more people know how to use labour market information and more are using it in career planning and program planning. By increasing the number of relevant LMI resources for career planning, and by increasing awareness and understanding of the value of using labour market information, the Initiative has contributed to increasing the integration of labour market information into career planning and decision making.

Although the objective of the LMI Strategic Initiative specifically identifies the secondary and post-secondary school audiences, the focus of the LMI Strategic Initiative was broader than this to encompass the entire career planning audience, including government clients on employment insurance or income assistance and the career practitioners who provide support to them as they strive to integrate, or reintegrate, into the labour market. The Initiative had an impact on all these audiences, but its greatest impact was on the career practitioners who provide support to government clients. The Initiative was less effective in addressing the needs of the secondary school audience. Teachers, who were less likely than other career practitioners to use LMI, were more likely to have difficulty accessing LMI, and less likely to have access to the internet. They were also less likely to feel that resources met their needs. Contractors and counselors, on the other hand, who were more likely to use LMI, were less likely to have difficulty in accessing LMI and were

more likely to have access to the internet. Compared with teachers, contractors were much more likely to feel that LMI resources met their needs, and counselors were somewhat more likely to feel this way.

Overall Conclusions

During the course of the LMI Strategic Initiative, a paradigm shift occurred regarding the use of labour market information. More than ever before, career practitioners and program planners are using labour market information. At the end of the Initiative there were more and better quality LMI resources than there had been when the Initiative began. Many of these resources were the work of the Initiative, in whole or in part.

Because of the increasing concern with labour market issues, some of the activity of the Initiative — and the resulting LMI resources — may have occurred even if the Initiative had not happened. There is no way to know how much would have occurred, though. The Initiative did, however, provide a forum for this activity, and for partners to work together to address the need for better LMI for career planning purposes. The Initiative also provided funding that made it possible to significantly increase the level of activity in this area compared with what had happened before the Initiative.

By partnering with, and involving, a wide range of career practitioners and program planners in its activities, the Initiative was responsive to the needs resulting from the paradigm shift. By increasing the number of relevant LMI resources for career planning, and by increasing awareness and understanding of the value of using labour market information, the Initiative contributed to increasing the integration of labour market information into career planning and decision making.

Although there is a greater recognition of the value of LMI now, the paradigm shift is not complete. More work is needed around raising awareness and teaching the value of using labour market information in career planning and program planning, and around informing intended users about what LMI resources are available. Even once the shift is complete, and the need for labour market information in career planning and program planning is accepted by all, work will need to continue in order to continue to meet this need.

Lack of time is a factor that limits how quickly this shift can occur. Those who are not experienced with labour market information need to take time to learn about it and its uses. They need to know what resources are available to address their needs, and how to make effective use of these resources. This takes time, which is limited for many. Many intended users find it difficult to find the time to learn something new and hence, some are behind others in their facility with using labour market information.

Although the LMI Strategic Initiative has been effective in improving the quality of labour market information, there is a continued need for work in this area. Labour market information is timely information that becomes outdated relatively quickly. There is the danger that if resources used for career planning are not kept up-to-date, people will end

up making ill-informed decisions. The potential damage will depend on how much the labour market has changed since the resources were developed. For specific sectors that have experienced a lot of change, either growth or decline, the result of using out-dated resources could be a reduction in effective functioning of the labour market. People could end up making career decisions that are not consistent with the changes in the labour market, resulting in higher unemployment, and/or skills shortages in the labour force.

In addition to the need to keep LMI resources up-to-date, there are needs that the LMI Strategic Initiative was not able to address. In particular, the needs of people with disabilities for accessible and relevant labour market information. Occupational information is also needed for people with low levels of education.

As a means of improving the functioning of the labour market, labour market information is serving a public good. One benefit of the Initiative is that it was able to fund the free distribution of many of the resources. This is likely an important factor in the Initiative's effectiveness, as about half the people in the intended audiences did not have adequate budgets to meet their LMI needs. Lack of budget was not a limiting factor for these people because of the widespread free distribution of the resources, both in print, and electronically. The ending of the Initiative has meant that there is less funding for the creation and dissemination of LMI resources.

Since audiences do not have enough money to purchase the LMI resources they need, the collection and dissemination of LMI cannot be self sufficient. To continue to address the LMI needs of career practitioners and end-users, and encourage the further integration of LMI into career planning, continued government funding is needed for the collection, development and dissemination of LMI, and training in its use.

The principal benefits of the LMI Strategic Initiative have been the development of effective partnerships for the collection, development and dissemination of LMI resources and the creation of LMI resources that meet the needs of a diverse range of users. The needs are ongoing, but the shelf life of LMI resources is not. Work on updating resources and developing new resources will have to continue if the needs of users are to continue to be met. Whether the significant benefits that the LMI Strategic Initiative has achieved will be sustained depends on the availability of government funding to continue work in this area.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Labour Market Information Strategic Initiative

The Labour Market Information (LMI) Strategic Initiative was one of a number of initiatives funded across Canada under the federal Strategic Initiatives Program as part of a process to obtain input for a review of the social security system in Canada. The Province of British Columbia, together with the Federal Government, entered into a *Cooperation Agreement Concerning the Labour Market Components of the Canada/British Columbia Strategic Initiatives* (Labour Market Strategic Initiatives Agreement) in August 1995 to fund initiatives designed to test approaches to social security reform in British Columbia in the areas of employment, learning and education, income security and services. The agreement provided up to $88 million (on a 50-50 cost-shared basis) to jointly design, direct, implement and evaluate six labour market initiatives in British Columbia.

The objectives of the Strategic Initiatives Program were to:

- contribute to the development of consensus on policy and program directions with the provinces and territories;
- provide the momentum for change and facilitate the transition;
- provide the capacity to develop and evaluate concrete initiatives consistent with reform options; and
- address the needs of Canadians in the areas of employment and training, learning and education, and security.

The LMI Strategic Initiative addressed the last of these objectives, that is, the needs of Canadians in the areas of employment and training, learning and education, and security. The objective of the LMI Strategic Initiative was: "*to answer the need for the development, production and distribution of high-quality job and career-related labour market information and, particularly, its integration into career counselling in secondary and post-secondary educational settings, in order to support the school-to-work transition*"[2].

According to the Labour Market Strategic Initiatives Agreement, the LMI Strategic Initiative was to address this objective by:

- studying emerging requirements for labour market information at the community level;
- identifying the specific products and services needed;
- producing and distributing these products and services as required;

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2 *Cooperation Agreement Concerning the Labour Market Components of the Canada/British Columbia Strategic Initiatives*, Schedule C, 1995.

- establishing standards for the development and dissemination of those products and services; and
- testing the relative effectiveness of alternative community-based delivery mechanisms.

The Joint Committee on Enhanced Labour Market Information provided overall direction for the LMI Strategic Initiative. The composition of the committee was intended to provide a broad range of input into the planning of the activities of the Initiative. The federal-provincial co-chairs of the Joint Committee made the final funding decisions. In addition to the Joint Committee, there were sub-committees that oversaw planning for each activity area. A sub-committee could consist of individuals on the joint committee as well as representatives of agencies with an interest in the particular activity area. Each sub-committee was responsible for establishing priority activities and funding implications, and generating an implementation plan for meeting the objectives of the LMI Strategic Initiatives within their area. The sub-committee chairs met to determine whether the plans of the sub-committees fit into the overall Initiative. Individual projects were managed by a working group, usually consisting of at least one person from the sub-committee as well as other people with an interest in the project.

There were five main activity areas for the LMI Strategic Initiative:

- Research and data development: to develop new sources of labour market data for use in career-related labour market information products and services;

- New and enhanced information products: to produce and distribute new career-related labour market information products, using existing or new sources of labour market information;

- Community-based information partnerships: to pilot test selected community-based projects, in collaboration with community or sectoral agencies;

- Implementation of new technologies: to test the relative merits of alternative delivery mechanisms and technologies for the dissemination of labour market information in schools, community agencies, homes and government offices; and

- Quality standards and training: research to develop standards for training of career practitioners and quality standards (currency, accuracy, etc.) for the development of labour market information, as well as pilot testing training approaches and strategies for delivering training.

In addition, the LMI Strategic Initiative linked with the Assessment, Counselling and Referral (ACR) Strategic Initiative to work together to produce products to meet the labour market information resource needs of the ACR Initiative. (The purpose of the ACR Initiative was to test and demonstrate an enhanced assessment counselling and referral system for people on income support to improve the linkages within and between employment programs, the individual on income support, and the labour market).

Through the Labour Market Strategic Initiatives Agreement, the governments of Canada and British Columbia provided contribution funding of approximately $8,210,000 for the Labour Market Information Strategic Initiative for the period from 1995/96 to 1998/99. Each funding partner also spent additional funds on administration costs, translations and other related expenses.

About 100 projects were funded by the LMI Strategic Initiative. Projects are defined as publications, community-based initiatives, websites, research documents, resource listings and guides, inventories and annotated listings of available sources of labour market information. Also included are brochures, displays, marketing, standards and training activities. These projects resulted in:

- the production and distribution of 26 LMI print resources, including updating and reprinting four of the print resources;
- the development and distribution of six facilitator's guides and lesson plans;
- the on-line mounting of 31 resources, including three editions of *Career Paths*;
- the creation or support for the development of 12 websites, including *BC WorkInfoNet*, various local websites, Community Skills Centres websites and industry-specific and special interest websites;
- the creation of five CD ROMs for various audiences, such as *Career Gateways*, and *Xplore Science Careers;*
- the development and distribution of seven resource guides, annotated listings and inventories, including the brochure "What's Key in Labour Market Information;"
- the production of 17 research papers, models and databases; and
- the delivery of 32 public forums, workshops and training sessions throughout the province, including 22 community-based LMI seminars in the spring of 1998.

1.2 Evaluation Purpose and Methodology

An evaluation framework for the Initiative was completed in January 1997. The framework report[3] provided a detailed description of each of the components of the Initiative and identified the potential issues that could be addressed in the formative and summative evaluations. The formative evaluation was completed in July 1997.

The summative evaluation of the LMI Strategic Initiative reported here was conducted to assess the impacts and effects of the Initiative and to determine whether it has:

- enhanced coordination in the development, production and dissemination of labour market information;

- increased integration of labour market information into career planning and decision making;

- improved labour market information products and services to better meet the needs of a diverse range of users; and

[3] *Evaluation Framework for the Labour Market Information Strategic Initiative*, January 1997.

- increased access to labour market information resources that meet the needs of a diverse range of users.

The evaluation approach entailed the following data collection components:

- Interviews and fax survey of career practitioners who provide assistance to individuals doing career planning, and analysts and program planners who are involved in the collection, dissemination and/or use of labour market information for planning of employment and education programs;

- Survey of end-users, including secondary students, income assistance and employment insurance recipients doing career planning with a federal or provincial contractor, and post-secondary students; and

- Case studies of 15 projects carried out through the LMI Strategic Initiative.

Each component is briefly described in the following sections. A complete description of each component, including sample selection and response rates, is provided in the companion report, *The Summative Evaluation of the Labour Market Information Strategic Initiative: Detailed Findings.*

Interviews and Fax Surveys

The primary data collection component entailed a combination of faxed surveys and telephone interviews of 150 people. Data were collected from each of the 150 respondents in two ways:

- A brief questionnaire containing the rating questions was faxed to the respondent. The respondent was asked to complete the survey, usually by circling the appropriate rating, and fax it back to the evaluator.

- Each respondent was also interviewed by telephone, after the completed survey was received. The telephone interview focused on open-ended questions, including those to followup on the reasons for respondents' ratings.

The 150 respondents consisted of people selected as follows:

- Secondary classroom teachers providing career and personal planning instruction to grade 11 or 12 students; one teacher was selected in each of 20 schools; each school was from a different school district. The school districts were randomly selected so that four districts were selected in each of five regions of the province. The schools were randomly selected from the district.

- Post-secondary counselors who provide career counselling to post-secondary students at colleges and institutes in British Columbia. Counselors were randomly selected from throughout the province, with the restriction that four were from universities or university colleges, four were from colleges, and two were from institutes.

- Contractors providing career planning assistance to clients of either the Skills Development Division of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology (MAETT) or the Human Resources Centres of Canada (HRCC) in British Columbia. Contractors were selected from a database containing the names of contractors providing career planning or employment assistance services to clients of either the federal or provincial government. Ten contractors were randomly selected from each of five regions in the province.

- Federal and provincial field personnel who provide, or oversee the provision of, employment planning assistance to federal or provincial clients. Fifteen federal and fifteen provincial field personnel were randomly selected to ensure equal representation from all regions of the province.

- Analysts and program planners who are involved in the collection, analysis, dissemination and/or use of labour market information for planning of employment and education programs. The 40 were selected to ensure all areas in the provincial and federal governments that pertained to planning employment or education programs were represented. Half of this group had been directly involved in the delivery of the Initiative, as members of the Joint Committee or one of the sub-committees of the Initiative, or directly involved in one or more of the projects. The other half had no direct involvement in the delivery of the Initiative.

Survey of End-Users

To provide additional information on the needs of end-users, a sample of end-users was surveyed. Data collection consisted of a mail-back survey of three groups of end-users:

- Grade 11 or 12 students enrolled in 1 of 10 career program classes: Out of the 20 secondary school teachers selected as described above, 10 (2 from each region) were asked to distribute the survey to their class.

- Employment Insurance and Income Assistance recipients receiving career planning services from a federal or provincial government: Ten of the 50 contractors (2 from each region) were each asked to distribute the survey to up to 40 of their clients.

- Post-secondary students enrolled in British Columbia: All 10 post-secondary counselors were asked about the feasibility of distributing a survey to post-secondary students. Counselors from three institutions agreed to distribute the survey.

Case Studies

Case studies were conducted on 15 projects. Each case study is presented as a profile of a project, or set of related projects that were funded by the Initiative. The profiles provide illustrations of some of the impacts of the projects, both large and small. In some cases, the impacts are local, as the project is only intended to have a local impact. In other cases, the impacts are much broader in scope. The profiles illustrate some of the challenges faced in carrying out projects of this nature, and some of the lessons learned in doing so.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this evaluation come from a variety of sources, with varying degrees of generalizability. To generalize findings to a population with a high degree of confidence, the findings must come from a sample that was representative of the population. This was achieved for the four sub-groups of career practitioners: secondary teachers teaching career planning, post-secondary counselors, government field personnel and contractors providing career planning services to government clients. In each case, the sample was selected using stratified random sampling techniques to ensure that the sample was representative of the population. In addition, a very high response rate was achieved, ensuring that the sample from whom data were collected was as representative as was the original sample selected. Thus, for the four groups of career practitioners it is possible to generalize the results to the entire sub-population from which they were selected with a high degree of confidence.

Confidence is lower for generalizations from the analysts and planners group, because the sample is not statistically representative of the population of analysts and planners. It was not possible to select a representative sample because it is not possible to completely define the population. Instead, an attempt was made to identify all possible components of the population and select a sample that included people from all components. In addition, this population is very heterogeneous with respect to their experience with, and needs for, labour market information. Hence, caution should be exercised in any attempt to draw conclusions about all analysts and planners based on the findings from the sample of analysts and planners.

The results for the survey of end-users can be generalized to each population of end-users with varying degrees of confidence, although with overall lower levels of confidence than for the above groups. Among end-users, confidence is highest for secondary school students because this sample has the greatest likelihood of being representative of the population from which it was selected — secondary students taking career planning instruction in BC. This is because the selection of this sample was tied in with the selection of secondary school teachers. Both were based on a stratified random sampling of school districts within BC, and of secondary schools within the selected districts. Once the school was selected, the appropriate teacher was identified and was asked to distribute the survey to an entire class of students taking career planning instruction. Hence, the sample of classes surveyed should be representative of the population of secondary students taking career planning instruction in BC.

Compared with secondary students, confidence in the generalizability of the findings is lower for post-secondary students and for clients of contractors, because we have no way of knowing how representative these samples are since their selection was less under the control of the evaluators. Although ten post-secondary institutions were randomly selected, only three could distribute a survey to their students. The students surveyed were those who happened to be seen by the counselors during the time period when the survey was being distributed, and may or may not be representative of post-secondary students doing career planning. Since most institutions are not represented in the sample, it is

unlikely that the sample is representative of the entire population of post-secondary students doing career planning in BC.

Clients were surveyed by the contractors in the sample of career practitioners. Hence the contractors who surveyed their clients are representative of the population of contractors and their clients should be representative of the population of clients. The contractors were asked to distribute the survey to all clients they served during a specified time period. We do not know, though, whether the clients served during this time period were representative of all their clients, and we do not know how many clients agreed to participate (the response rate), hence we do not know how representative of the population of government clients is the resulting sample. None the less, the client sample is likely more representative of the client population than the sample of post-secondary students is of the population of post-secondary students and hence we can have higher confidence in the client data than in the post-secondary data.

For further information about sample selection and response rates, refer to the companion report, *The Summative Evaluation of the Labour Market Information Strategic Initiative: Detailed Findings*.

1.3 Organization of Report

This report presents a summary of the evaluation findings, organized by evaluation issue, with conclusions on each issue. The next chapter presents information about the projects that were selected for case study. Chapter 3 presents a summary of the findings on addressing the needs of users, including use of LMI, access to LMI resources and usefulness of the resources. Chapter 4 summarizes the findings as they bear on the four objectives of the Strategic Initiative. In Chapter 5, overall benefits and impacts of the Initiative are discussed, including the sustainability of its benefits. Conclusions that bear on the issues are provided throughout the report.

The complete findings are presented in detail in the companion to this report, *Summative Evaluation of the Labour Market Information Strategic Initiative: Detailed Findings*. Complete profiles of the 15 case studies are provided in a separate report: *Summative Evaluation of the Labour Market Information Strategic Initiative: Profiles of Selected Projects*.

2. Case Study Findings

As part of the evaluation, profiles were developed for 15 projects funded through the LMI Strategic Initiative. The projects were selected because they were expected to reveal useful lessons on collecting LMI and producing and disseminating LMI resources, and to illustrate a range of different types of projects funded by the Initiative. They are not intended to be a representative sample of the 100 or so projects funded by the Initiative. Seven were community-based projects, which, by their very nature, could be expected to have an impact only at the local level. The remaining eight case studies were distributed over the other four components of the Initiative, all of which could be expected to have an impact at the provincial level. Table 2.1 gives a breakdown of the 15 projects according to the component of the Initiative that funded it.

TABLE 2.1
Projects Profiled from Each Component of the LMI Strategic Initiative

Community-Based Information Partnerships Projects:
- *Valley Links: Comox Valley Community Information System Network*
- *What Can You Do with a Degree?* Website
- *Central Island Employment Net* Website
- Community Skills Centres *Get Web Help*
- *Learning Works* Web Guide
- *Getting into the A.C.T.: A Practical Guide to Arts Career Trends in British Columbia*: Brochure and Website
- CD ROM: *Xplore Science Careers*

New and Enhanced Information Products Projects:
- *Work Futures: BC Occupational Outlooks* and *Work Scene: BC Work Futures for Youth*
- *Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information* manual and facilitator's guide

Implementation of New Technologies Projects:
- *BC WorkInfoNet (BC WIN)* Website
- *Tourism Career Connections* Website

Research and Data Development Projects:
- BC Regional Employment Projection Model
- *On Track: Private Training Outcomes Survey*

Training, Standards and Certification Projects:
- *Career Gateways: Applying Labour Market Information in a Changing World*
- *Accessible LMI for Persons with Disabilities*

The complete profiles are provided in a separate document: *The Summative Evaluation of the Labour Market Information Strategic Initiative: Profiles of Selected Projects.* Each profile contains a complete description of the project and how it was carried out. Information on the impacts, or potential impacts of each project, is also included. Also included are the lessons learned by people who were involved in carrying out each project about the collection, production or dissemination of LMI. The information for the profiles was collected through interviews with people involved in carrying out the project, and in some cases, with users, or people with a knowledge of the impact or potential impact of the project. This chapter provides a overview of each project, as well as a summary of the key lessons that were learned from these projects.

2.1 Overview of Projects Profiled

Valley Links: Comox Valley Community Information System Network

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $74,566[4]

Internet address: www.valleylinks.net

The *Comox Valley Community Information System Network*, also known as *Valley Links*, is an ongoing network of linked websites containing economic, demographic, labour market, tourism and community information about the Comox Valley, as well as links with information outside the community. The goal is to provide the public, including investors, business people, and people doing career planning, with the information they need to make good decisions.

The home page provides the user with links to the various pages, including the Economy and Jobs page. The Economy and Jobs page provides links to a variety of sites with information on the local economy through links to the various Chambers of Commerce in the Valley, as well as the Comox Valley Economic Development Society and the local HRCC. It also provides links to agencies that provide job search and career development assistance, and links to sites with career planning and labour market information, including the *BC WorkInfoNet* site.

As of the Spring 1999, there were over 150 agencies, organizations and programs profiled on the Community Network Site. The Society continues to operate and expand the network with funding from various sources and employs an Executive Director to oversee the work of the Society, including maintaining and expanding the website and installing public access terminals throughout the Valley.

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[4] For each case study, the amount only includes what was provided by the LMI Strategic Initiative. In many cases, other sources of funds were also used, sometimes from other Strategic Initiatives or other federal or provincial programs. In-kind contributions, from various sources, were also common.

What Can You Do with a Degree? Website

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $17,650

Internet address: http://vaughan.fac.unbc.ca/counsel/jobarchiv/

This project, carried out by the counselling department of the University of Northern British Columbia, created a searchable database of real job postings that were no longer current, to assist post-secondary students, or those planning a post-secondary education, to determine the employment potential of various degree programs. Students can use the information to determine what education and experience will be needed for the kind of employment they hope to get. Graduates and near graduates can use the database to get information on some employers, and industries that might hire someone with the education they have just completed so they can pursue a more targeted job search.

The database can be searched by degree level, degree program or area of concentration. The user can specify all three, or just one or two. The search engine will return an overview of all the job listings matching the criteria that were found. This overview provides the job title, the expiry date, the name of the employer, and the type of employment, such as part-time, contract or summer employment. Using the mouse, the user can click on any job of interest to get details about the job. The details can include, depending on what information was in the original job listing, wages, number of hours, location, academic requirements, and other information such as responsibilities and required skills and qualifications.

The database integrity is maintained by the UNBC technical person who was adviser to the project. There is no funding for ongoing maintenance and updating of the database. Work study students are used and the head of the counselling department provides instruction and oversees the work.

Central Island Employment Net

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $50,000

Internet address: http://www.island.net/~cien/

The *Central Island Employment Net* (CIEN) is a comprehensive information network encompassing a database of programs, services and information available for unemployed people of the Central Vancouver Island area. The purpose of the Central Island Employment Net was to increase communication, cooperation and coordination among agencies that provide services to the unemployed in the area.

The CIEN website provides information on services available to the unemployed for the Central Vancouver Island area. It organizes the information in two ways: through descriptions of 16 local agencies and their services; and through types of services available, such as academic upgrading, career exploration, job search techniques, personal development, service needs determination and skill training programs. Other relevant

sources of information on the internet are linked to the site within the body of the site's text. CIEN also provides information on job postings in the area.

In addition to the website, the project created a "listserv" for service providers that allows them to communicate quickly and easily among themselves and enables them to remain up-to-date on the services and activities of member agencies.

The agencies continue to use the "listserv" to communicate with one another. Most agencies also regularly update their home pages on the site; however, some agencies have not maintained their home pages and some of the links on the site have broken.

Community Skills Centres *Get Web Help*

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $25,000

Internet address: http://www.skills.bc.ca

The Labour Market Information Online Guide, on the website of the Community Skills Centres Consortium of British Columbia (CSCCBC), helps internet users to understand labour market information, to find the information they need for career planning, to determine how best to sell their skills and experience to employers, and to use the internet to find the information they need.

An interactive map of the province on the Consortium site also links visitors to the websites of the Community Skills Centres throughout the province. Clicking on a community name on the interactive map brings visitors to the website of the Skills Centre in that community. Some of these websites were developed with the assistance of the contracted web designer who created the consortium's website.

The CCSCBC site also provides a link to the *BC WorkInfoNet* site, as well as other LMI and career sites, and the LMI Online Guide. The guide consists of four parts: Using LMI; Finding LMI; Using the Internet; and Taking the Next Steps. The first page, Using LMI, defines LMI and describes how to use it by leading the user to pages on assessment, career planning and training. Each of these pages provides a brief overview of the topic, and links to other relevant websites, with short descriptions of the purpose of each of the linked sites. The Finding LMI page provides a brief overview of where to obtain labour market information. Using the Internet offers the beginner an internet tutorial, and Taking the Next Step recaps the steps in beginning the career planning process and encourages users to contact HRDC with any questions on career planning.

Following the end of the Initiative, there has been no formal mechanism to ensure that the information on the CSCs' sites is updated regularly. Keeping each site current is the responsibility of its respective CSC, and the capability of each CSC to do this varies considerably. Some sites are updated regularly by the CSC's staff and contain a wealth of information on local LMI and services offered, but others have become out of date and links both to pages within their site and to other sites that have been broken or have become corrupted.

Learning Works Web Guide

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $25,000

Internet address: http://www.camosun.bc.ca/~learnwks/

This pilot project developed a database and website of education and employment support programs for adults in Greater Victoria. The purpose was to provide a centralized database for adult learners and people seeking employment with information about the program choices available in Greater Victoria, as well as information on how to pursue these opportunities. The goal was to improve access to academic and employment support programs in Greater Victoria. A secondary purpose was to provide the service providers with information about what services and programs were available to their clients. This would allow them to make appropriate referrals and to identify gaps in programming that they may wish to address.

The database consists of two components: agency contact information and a classification scheme used for searching for information. A user can search for information on programs and services using a number of factors, such as eligibility information, like age or membership in an equity group; and the type of service, such as career exploration, courses or skills sought.

There are about 20 agencies with paid-up registration to the database until June 1999. The registration fees have been used to keep someone on contract to look after membership fees and for contacting agencies to keep them involved. Some of the links have been lost because of lack of resources to maintain the site. In April 1999, *BC WorkInfoNet* agreed to take over the database, update its contents, and place it on their website.

Getting Into the A.C.T.: A Practical Guide to Arts Career Trends in British Columbia

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $68,750

Internet address: http://www.artsjobs.bc.ca

The Pacific Music Industry Association (PMIA) developed a booklet and website examining career trends in the cultural industries of motion picture production, music and new media development and technology. The purpose was to provide young people interested in careers in the arts with practical insights into the working world of the motion picture, music and new media industries in British Columbia. Virtually no labour market information existed for the sector prior to this project, and it was intended to fill the gap. The 27-page *Getting Into the A.C.T.* booklet is written simply in a conversational style to appeal to young people. It first discusses employability skills in the film, music or new media industries, as well as the importance of developing an entrepreneurial approach and business skills, such as marketing oneself and networking. The booklet goes on to devote a section to each of the three industries, describing types of jobs, providing insider tips on getting into the industry, and discussing practical steps like volunteering, researching the

industry, obtaining training and ways to get your foot in the door. A section on career profiles provides a comprehensive table of jobs in the industries, along with their associated skills, and a section on education outlines the various public and private post-secondary institutions in the province and whether they offer programs related to any of the three industries. Finally, the booklet provides some general advice on succeeding in the cultural industry, such as focusing on goals, applying oneself and following one's passion.

The *Getting Into the A.C.T.* website expands on the information in the booklet, with an even more conversational style and in a format designed to grab the user's attention and interest. In addition to this information, the website features an interactive component through which visitors can enter their skill set to discover jobs in the industry for which they are suited or qualified. It also provides links to websites of the province's post-secondary schools and various industry associations, and has an on-line question form. As of Spring 1999, the PMIA was attempting to locate a new host for the website, as the existing arrangement was set to expire. The association was also attempting to find the means to fund maintenance and updating of the site.

CD ROM: *Xplore Science Careers*

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $33,925

Xplore Science Careers is a interactive, multimedia CD ROM that profiles eight women working in science and technology jobs. The purpose of the project, which was carried out by the Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology (SCWIST), was to provide a portable and flexible information tool about the variety of careers available to women working in science and technology. Profiled on the CD ROM are eight women with the following jobs: Aquatic Biologist, Biology Instructor, Bio-medical Engineer, Environmental Consultant, Lab Technician, Landscape Architect, Multimedia Producer, and Telecommunications Engineer.

At the beginning of the CD ROM, the user has three modules to choose from: Knowing Yourself, Women at Work, and Career Resources. The "Knowing Yourself" module is a brief self survey of strengths and interests. The user can complete the survey and compare her results with those of the women profiled. The "Women at Work" module contains profiles of the eight women. Each profile includes a graphic career path with a photo of the woman and a brief overview. The profiles are organized into three sections. "The Path", which describes the path the woman took from childhood to her current career; "What It's Like", a description of the work the woman does, including two sound clips of the woman talking about what her job is like, and how she integrates her career with family responsibilities; and "Things to Know", which is advice from each woman about pursuing a career in science and technology. The third component of the CD ROM, "Career Resources", contains brief lists of organizations and websites with information relevant to careers in: computer science, engineering, life sciences, physical sciences and technology. Information on other websites of interest is also provided, as well as information about SCWIST.

SCWIST is seeking funds to promote and market the CD ROM. It continues to promote the CD ROM at venues where SCWIST promotes its organization.

Work Futures: BC Occupational Outlooks and *Work Scene*

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding for the *Work Futures* resource and facilitator's guide, and the publishing tool: $401,730; for the *Work Scene* resource, facilitator's guide and lesson plans: $97,310

Internet address for *Work Futures*: http://workfutures.bc.ca

Internet address for *Work Scene*: http://workinfonet.bc.ca/workscene

Work Futures: BC Occupational Outlooks provides information about nearly 200 occupations in BC, including information on working conditions, educational requirements and employment outlooks. *Work Scene: BC Work Futures for Youth* presents the occupational profiles in a quick-reference, easy-to-use format designed for youth.

The 182 occupational profiles are organized into 10 chapters, with at least 25 occupational profiles in each. Within each chapter, profiles are organized by skill level, based on the amount of education or training needed for the occupation. Each profile in *Work Futures* contains a general description of the occupation, the education and training required, working conditions and employment prospects. An on-line version of *Work Futures* allows for keyword searches and links with the resource, making it easy to navigate within the resource.

Work Scene: BC Work Futures for Youth, is a re-written version of *Work Futures* containing the same occupational groups, organized into the same 10 chapters. The information has been simplified and the language written to a grade 10/11 literacy level. The book also includes photos and information on individuals working in each occupation. A PDF (Portable Document Format) version of *Work Scene* is also available on the internet; an interactive on-line version has not been created.

Because of the scope of *Work Futures*, and its broad use, keeping it up to date is a priority. In Spring 1999, discussion was under way about updating *Work Futures* with the latest Census and COPS data. Resources, both funding and people, will be needed to do this.

Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $66,968

Internet address: http://workinfonet.bc.ca/lmisi/making/Mcstoc.htm

Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information consists of a manual and facilitator's guide, which were produced approximately one year apart. The course introduces career practitioners to key socio-economic and labour market concepts, trends and issues. It reviews the effects that demographics, technology, increased competition, globalization

and structural economic change are having on the labour market. The resource highlights the occupations and skills required in a changing economy as well as occupational classification and forecasts used to describe the changes. Practical examples are provided on researching and using LMI in the job search and career development process.

The facilitator's guide, a companion publication to the manual, has been used to train trainers on incorporating LMI in career development and has formed the basis of one-, three- and five-day courses offered around the province for career practitioners, including teachers and career counselors in the K-12 school system, and career counselors in social agencies and government.

BC WorkInfoNet (BC WIN) Website and Society

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $674,429

Internet address: http://workinfonet.bc.ca

The *BC WorkInfoNet* website comprises annotated links to labour market and career information websites throughout BC and Canada. The purpose of the website is to provide "one-stop" access to labour market and career information in electronic form in BC to make useful on-line labour market and career information accessible to British Columbians. Direction for the website is provided by the British Columbia Work Information Network Society, a collection of partnerships between funders, producers and users of labour market and career information.

The website provides one-stop access to a wide range of resources and services. Some of the links that are available at *BC WorkInfoNet* are: *Changing Times, Career Paths, Motiv8, Realm: Creating Work You Want, What Works, Career Gateways, Work Futures* and *Work Scene: BC Work Futures For Youth.*

The *BC Youth* site is also linked to *BC WIN*. The youth site is aimed at a 15 to 29 year-old audience. To assist users in making better use of the website, *BC WIN* has an on-line tutorial, *Surfing for Work in B.C.* The tutorial gives a brief introduction to how the Internet can be used as a tool to help people find work in the province and to use on-line resources for developing their careers. The website also provides information on resources available, on-line and in print, and how to obtain them. In addition, the site has a listserv for career practitioners with over 600 members.

At the end of the Initiative, *BC WIN* lost its stable source of funding, so it had to shut down some of its services. As of Spring 1999, funding sources for *BC WIN* included Human Resources Development Canada; the BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology; the BC Ministry of Education; and *Can WorkInfoNet*. The funding has allowed for continued development of the site, but at a reduced level. On April 13, *BC WIN* launched a new user interface at its annual general meeting. The interface organizes the website for each user group.

Tourism Career Connections Website

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $153,350

Internet address: http://www.prit.bc.ca

The Pacific Rim Institute of Tourism's (PRIT) *Tourism Career Connections* website is a comprehensive information source for tourism career development with an electronic labour exchange currently under development. The site is intended to raise awareness of the tourism industry labour market and to provide a realistic picture of its employment opportunities.

The Pacific Rim Institute of Tourism (PRIT) *Tourism Career Connections* website is an extensive resource for those interested in a career in BC's tourism sector. It includes a checklist of skills and interests to determine whether tourism is right for the user; lists of job types in various parts of the sector; and the Tourism Career Action Plan, which provides sources of information about the industry and looks at educational opportunities available.

In addition to developing the website, PRIT was funded under the LMI Strategic Initiative to determine the feasibility of an electronic labour exchange for the industry. PRIT piloted an industry-specific on-line job bank with tourism employers to discover their needs around an electronic labour exchange. The job bank will provide industry-specific employment opportunities and on-line worker job matching services. It will consist of occupational skill checklists, as well as employee résumés and descriptive job summaries. The tourism occupational skill checklists, used by both employers and job seekers to create job or skill profiles, will map to the corresponding checklists on HRDC's national Electronic Labour Exchange.

PRIT maintains the website and continues to market the site through all of its activities, including presentations at secondary schools and industry presentations. PRIT is working with software developers to create the on-line tourism job bank from the model created and incorporate it into the national Electronic Labour Exchange that should be operational by Summer 1999.

BC Regional Employment Projection Model

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $50,000

The BC Regional Employment Projection Model (REPM) is an econometric model to predict employment changes at the sub-provincial level for various industries. REPM provides a projection of employment by region by taking forecasts of direct employment and calculating the indirect and induced employment impacts of changes in the direct employment numbers.

The value of the model is to measure the effects of various "shock" scenarios at the community level. It can calculate employment projections for a community, based on an

anticipated economic shock, such as the expiration of the contract for ore, resulting in a mine closure. For instance, it can show the impact of a mine closure on direct and indirect employment in a community where 500 people will be laid off.

In Spring 1999, BC STATS was in the process of updating the model with 1996 census data. Additional funding would be needed to complete the updating, as BC STATS cannot do this within their regular budget. The model as developed can be used by econometricians. Further development is needed to make it easy for program planners to use. Discussions were under way about the possibility of securing funding for these improvements.

On Track: Private Training Outcomes Survey

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $327,026

Internet address: http:///www.ceiss.org/edresearch/ontrack

This was a pilot project to test the feasibility of collecting education and employment outcome information from former students of private post-secondary institutions in BC. The *On Track*: Private Training Outcomes Survey, is an ongoing follow-up survey designed to capture outcome information from graduates of BC private training institutions. The outcomes survey data provide demographic information about the graduates, their employment outcomes, the relevance of their training to their employment, and level of satisfaction with the program they graduated from.

The data obtained can be used for the following purposes:

- to assist government/funders in making training expenditure/referral decisions;
- to provide clients with information to make decisions about which field of study to take and which institute to attend;
- to provide private training institutes with survey information that could be used as a marketing tool; and
- to provide the general public with labour market and training information.

The *On Track* project continues with funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education Training and Technology and from Human Resources Development Canada (in a two-thirds, one-third split).

Career Gateways CD ROM and On-Line Application

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $65,000, plus $107,000 for the *Virtual LMI Toolkit*, included in *Career Gateways*.

Internet address: http://careergateways.org.

Career Gateways: Applying Labour Market Information in a Changing World is a CD-ROM and on-line application that is designed for a broad audience of career practitioners,

and incorporates a significant number of facilitator resources, such as *Work Futures* and *Career Paths*, as well as a "navigational road map" to key resources in BC. The purpose of the CD is to maximize the use of existing LMI resources by providing a user interface for career practitioners to access information on specific topics in various LMI resources. It is intended for career practitioners in the K to 12 school system, and the post-secondary system, as well as those in the community providing services to government clients.

Career Gateways: Applying Labour Market Information in a Changing World incorporates nine existing LMI resources, including *Work Futures* and *Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information*, that have been organized, linked and annotated by career practitioners from three areas: the K to 12 school system, the post-secondary system and contracted service providers. Career practitioners who working with students or clients are the primary audience for *Career Gateways*, but it can also be used directly by people doing career exploration.

From *Career Gateways'* opening page the user can read how *Career Gateways* can be used by the career practitioner, or can go to the "Library" for annotated information on the resources used in the CD ROM, as well as many others. Alternatively, the user can go directly into one of three activity modules: "K to 12", "Post-Secondary", or "Community Practitioners".

Each of the three activity modules provides an introduction on the module, and information on career planning and labour market information organized into the following topics: self awareness, introduction to LMI, occupational information, labour market trends, skills for the new economy, education and training, action plan, and career log. By clicking on a topic the user will find a description of the topic, and a set of activities and LMI resources related to the topic. The activities are presented in a list, with keywords and a brief description of each activity, and links to the actual activities and lessons in one of the five facilitator's guides on the CD. For each topic there is also a set of links to relevant information in various LMI resources on the CD ROM.

The Career Education Society continues to promote the CD at conferences for career practitioners. In Spring 1999, the Career Education Society began providing hands-on training on the CD ROM as a resource for career planning. Training sessions are being provided in local communities throughout the province, with funding from the Youth Initiative.

Accessible LMI for Persons with Disabilities

LMI Strategic Initiative Funding: $60,500

Internet address: http://workinfonet.bc.ca/lmisi/jointcom/AccessLMI/index.htm

The purpose of the Accessible LMI Project was to ensure that the considerations of persons with disabilities are understood and to improve the content and delivery of labour market information to its audiences. Accessibility is of particular concern to persons with

disabilities, who remain significantly under-represented in the labour market. Accessibility, as it relates to the community of persons with disabilities, is multi-faceted, encompassing not only the delivery, but also the content of the information.

The BC Office for Disability Issues (ODI), in partnership with Vancouver Hospital's Health Sciences Centre-GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre and BC's Educational Association of Disabled Students, undertook community consultations to determine the LMI needs of persons with disabilities. The project, Accessible LMI, was conducted in four phases:

- Phase I — Investigative Review involved the identification of existing activities relating to the production and delivery of LMI to persons with disabilities.

- Phase II — Community Consultations consisted of individual and group discussions with LMI practitioners and persons with disabilities to identify the needs and interests of persons with disabilities in their efforts to access LMI.

- Phase III — Standards Review involved the review of the Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB) criteria, guidelines and performance indicators for LMI products and services from a disability perspective.

- Phase IV — A Framework for the Coordinated Delivery of LMI to Persons With Disabilities outlines a step-by-step approach to the community-based delivery of labour market information and services. It incorporates the barrier-reducing features related to information content, language, format, and delivery options.

2.2 Lessons Learned from Case Studies about Collecting LMI and Producing and Disseminating LMI Resources

One of the purposes of the LMI Strategic Initiative was to test innovative methods of collecting labour market information and producing and disseminating LMI resources to learn what works and what doesn't. The case studies provide illustrations of what was learned through the various projects funded through the Initiative:

- *Work Futures* is a key example of how to provide labour market information in a format that can effectively meet the needs of a broad audience.

- *BC WorkInfoNet* demonstrates how the internet can be used effectively to disseminate labour market information across the province.

- *Career Gateways* provides an example of another alternative to print for disseminating labour market information, namely the CD ROM. It also provides an example of how to enhance the user's effective use of the resources.

- *Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information* manual and facilitator's guide, and the training delivered using this material, is another example of how to enhance the effective use of labour market information among career practitioners.

- The *Accessible LMI for Persons with Disabilities* project examined the issue of effective use of LMI from the perspective of addressing the needs of persons with disabilities. The Accessible LMI research will help inform producers and disseminators of LMI resources about how to address the LMI needs of persons with disabilities.

- *On Track* demonstrates an effective method of collecting labour market information, specifically on private sector training, that had not been collected before. The project also demonstrates the benefits to private sector trainers of having this information collected in a systematic, objective fashion.

- *Valley Links* is a good example of how to collect and disseminate local LMI as part of an integrated approach to providing community information.

- The *What Can You Do with a Degree?* website is an innovative way to provide information to help post-secondary students make career decisions and do education planning.

- *Getting Into the A.C.T., the Tourism Career Connections* website, and the *Xplore Science Careers* CD ROMs are very different approaches to providing sector-specific information for people doing career planning.

- The BC Regional Employment Projection Model addresses the need to make effective use of sector LMI at the local level. The model provides a method of using information about expected changes in specific sectors of the local economy to assist program planners and policy analysts.

- The Community Skills Centres *Get Web Help*, and the *Learning Works* Web Guide projects demonstrate some of the challenges in trying to collect local information so that it can be disseminated on the internet when participants are not internet "ready."

- A number of projects have faced challenges about how to sustain a useful project once Initiative funding had ended. Three examples that addressed this problem, with varying degrees of success in securing other funding, are the *Central Island Employment Net*, the *Learning Works* Web Guide, and the *BC WorkInfoNet* website.

- All the projects profiled here demonstrate the many benefits of the federal and provincial governments working in partnership with career practitioners and other users of labour market information.

A review of the lessons learned in each of the 15 case studies revealed some themes, or lessons that were common to a number of projects. The key lessons learned about collecting labour market information, and about developing or disseminating LMI resources, follow.

- Websites are an effective way to disseminate LMI, but they require ongoing maintenance to ensure that the site remains functional. However, maintenance requires resources. The LMI Strategic Initiative funded a number of organizations to develop websites, but the organizations were expected to provide for ongoing maintenance of the sites through their own resources or through funds from outside the Initiative. Some of the sites have been able to continue with other funding, but others have had difficulties in securing additional funding, so the sites have deteriorated. This means that the benefits of the initial funding can be short term if the site cannot be maintained.

- Use of the internet avoids the need to distribute print resources. One appeal of using the internet is the ability to keep the information up-to-date, without the need to do a costly re-printing. Users often expect that information on the internet is more up to date than is the print resource. In fact, the on-line versions of the resources developed for the Initiative have the same content as do the print versions. Updating resources on the internet requires the same resources needed to collect the new labour market information that would be required to update a print resource. The benefit of the internet for updating is avoiding the cost of reprinting the resource and disseminating the printed version. The Initiative did not provide resources to take advantage of this medium to provide up-to-date labour market information on a continuous basis. Since projects have had difficulty securing funds to maintain websites, they have not had the additional resources that would be needed to update the information.

- Being innovative means that the expertise is not always available when needed to carry out a project. There has been tremendous growth in software development for internet application, as well as an increase in the number of people with expertise in this area. When many of these projects began, however, the needed expertise was in limited supply and hence more expensive. The improvements in technology and the increase in expertise available will mean the future work of this type will be less costly to carry out.

- Since use of the internet was relatively new, some projects had challenges due to the lack of experience people had in using the internet. In some cases, this created difficulties in getting buy-in from those who needed to participate to make the project a success. Since then, people in general have become more experienced as users of the internet so this should not be an issue in the future.

- Planning is crucial for any project. Sometimes, time constraints for putting in proposals and for spending the money meant that there was not sufficient time for detailed planning, or for the research necessary to do effective planning. Planning also needs to take into account the cost of maintaining the resource or website when it is complete. Being innovative can pose challenges for planning. When being innovative, a trial and error approach may be necessary, but this has costs implications. It is more cost-effective to fully plan a project before implementation begins, whenever possible. Lack of knowledge about what was feasible, and the costs of various approaches, meant that sometimes projects were modified as implementation proceeded. Lack of knowledge about costs and feasibility also affected budgeting. In some cases, the original proposal had not adequately anticipated the costs of doing what was proposed and the project had to be modified.

- Marketing and distribution was often a challenge. Most people carrying out projects did not have marketing experience and at the beginning of the Initiative there was a lack of effective communication channels to use for promoting LMI resources to various audiences. In some cases, marketing and distribution were overlooked in planning and budgeting. Sometimes there was confusion over whose role this was, the recipients of the funding or the funders.

- Advisory committees, consisting of potential users of the product, can be an asset to planning to ensure that the needs of the intended audience remain the focus. A formal needs assessment, or focusing testing of product during development can ensure that the end product addresses the needs of the intended user.

- Processes that ensure clear communication are essential, especially with projects that involve a number of participants, each with different roles and responsibilities. Everyone's role needs to be clearly defined at the beginning, and decisions must be communicated to all participants, in case they affect other aspects of the project.

- Communication between the technical and the design people can be a challenge. Often the conceptual design had been developed before the technical team was brought in. In some cases, some aspect of the design was not feasible, or not within the budget available. Some projects had difficulty conveying the concept to the technical team. Participants in a few of the projects suggested bringing the technical people in early in the design phase. In a few cases, a consultant provided the communication link between the conceptual team and the technical team. This hampered, rather than improved, communication.

- Projects with a clear champion, usually an individual, were more likely to achieve their objectives and to secure continuing funding, where necessary. Projects without a champion, even though successfully completed, did not always have the anticipated impact because of lack of promotion after the Initiative funding ended. These champions generally volunteered a lot of their time to make the project a success.

- Many of the projects were overseen or directed by a committee or board, usually composed of people volunteering their time to the project. Volunteers typically have limited time to give to a project, which means that the project takes longer to complete.

- Often the work to create resources was contracted out, as government employees did not have time to take on the extra work. This addressed the need to get the project done on time, but it meant that the expertise developed through working on the projects was lost to the government organization. On the other hand, government personnel who did work on projects often did so in addition to their regular responsibilities, which resulted in delays because of lack of time to devote to the project.

- Career practitioner organizations were involved in carrying out a number of the projects. This had two benefits. It ensured that the product addressed the needs of the career practitioners group, and it increased the capacity of the career practitioners groups to carry out projects of this type.

- A number of projects benefited from lessons that participants had learned through working on other projects, such as the benefits of advisory committees and how to work in partnerships.

3. *Addressing User Needs*

The LMI Strategic Initiative attempted to address the needs of a diverse range of potential users of labour market information. At the broadest level, there are four types of audiences for labour market information: individuals doing career planning or looking for work, career practitioners who assist people in career planning, either individually or in groups; program planners who design education, training and employment programs to address labour market needs, and, analysts who collect and analyze labour market information for various uses.

Because the objective of the Initiative was to provide high quality labour market information for integration into career planning at the secondary and post-secondary levels, the Initiative has focused on the development and dissemination of LMI resources for career development purposes. With the expectation that the best way to encourage the integration of LMI into career planning was to concentrate on career practitioners, the focus of the Initiative's activities has been on addressing the needs of this group.

As the intended audience for much of the work of the Initiative, career practitioners were also the primary focus for the evaluation. Career practitioners are a large and diverse collection of professionals and paraprofessionals, who provide assistance to individuals doing career planning or looking for work. For this evaluation, the views of career practitioners were collected through both surveys and telephone interviews of a representative sample of the following career practitioner groups:

- classroom teachers in secondary schools teaching grade 11 and/or 12 students in the Career and Personnel Planning program;
- counselors providing career counselling to post-secondary students;
- career practitioners who work for not-for-profit and private agencies providing career development services to employment insurance recipients on contract to HRDC, and/or to income assistance recipients on contract to the MAETT; and
- provincial and federal employees who work in the field providing services to clients of MAETT, or HRDC, respectively.

Of these groups of career practitioners, those working with government clients on contract with either the federal or provincial government, are likely the biggest users of LMI, since the entire focus of their job is assisting clients with career planning and finding employment. The jobs of teachers and post-secondary counselors involves more than career development services, so they may use LMI resources to a lesser extent than do contracted career practitioners.

The jobs of field employees vary a lot, and have changed considerably during the period of the Initiative. Many no longer see clients directly, or only rarely. Their main focus is often on managing contractors who are providing services directly to clients. Their need for LMI will vary depending on whether or not they work directly with clients. Those who do not will likely use LMI resources less than those who work directly with clients.

The views of analysts and planners were also collected through surveys and telephone interviews. Analysts can be involved in the collection of LMI, in the production of LMI resources, and in the analysis of LMI for specific planning or policy analysis purposes. For these people, using LMI may be a central part of their job, but they may not be big users of many of the resources created through the Initiative, as these are more for career planning purposes. Program planners will use LMI for specific planning purposes and may only need LMI periodically. They will also be less likely to use many of the resources created through the Initiative because they are not involved in career planning.

Many of the resources created through the Initiative can also be used by individuals doing career planning or looking for work. These individuals are referred to as end-users in this report. For this evaluation, the views of three types of end-users were collected through surveys:

- secondary students;
- post-secondary students; and
- clients, including youth and adults, who are not working and are receiving employment insurance, income support, and are also receiving assistance from an agency on contract to the federal or provincial government to help them integrate or re-integrate into the labour force.

This chapter presents a summary of the views of end-users, career practitioners, analysts and program planners on how well their LMI needs were met.

3.1 Use and Access

Four issues pertaining to use of LMI and access to LMI are addressed in this section.

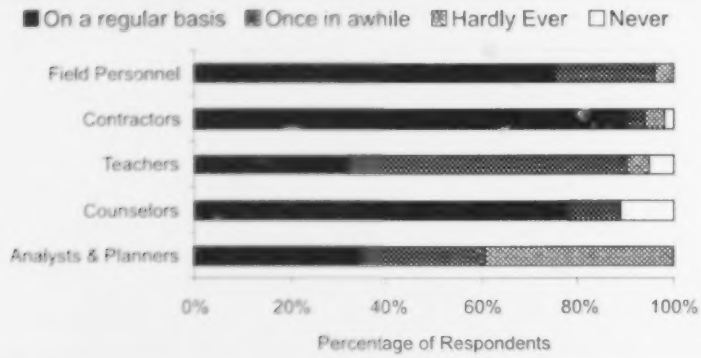
- Are the intended audiences aware of and using labour market information?
- Do they understand the appropriate uses of labour market information?
- Do the intended audiences have access to labour market information and products produced through the Initiative?
- Are the methods for access to LMI adequate and appropriate to the needs and resources of the intended users?

Use of Labour Market Information

The ratings of career practitioners, analysts and planners on how much they had used LMI overall are portrayed in Figure 3.1. Overall, use of LMI for career planning purposes was high among career practitioners. Contractors were the biggest users, with almost all having used it on a regular basis with their clients. Three-quarters of post-secondary

counselors and field personnel and about one-third of secondary career teachers had used LMI on a regular basis with their clients/students. This level of use reflected an increase for most over the last few years, primarily because of better access to LMI resources, the availability of more and better LMI resources, and greater recognition of the value of using LMI in career planning. In addition, contractors and post-secondary counselors had found more demand for LMI from their clients and students, who wanted to take labour market conditions into consideration in their career planning.

FIGURE 3.1
How Often LMI Was Used Overall
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners

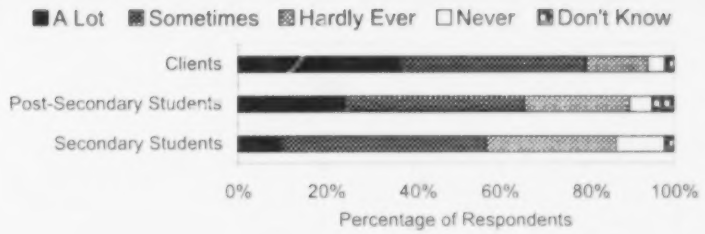


The reason for using LMI varied depending on the audience, but common among all career practitioners was the use of LMI to learn about the skills, education or training needed for specific occupations and for information about specific occupations, such as working conditions and salaries. Other common uses were to find out what jobs or occupations were in demand and to learn about training opportunities. Contractors and field personnel also used LMI to assist clients in finding jobs.

Only about one-third of analysts and planners had used LMI on a regular basis, although another quarter had used it once in a while. Almost one-half felt that their use of LMI had increased over the last few years. Analysts and planners use LMI in different ways than do career practitioners and end-users. Some analysts actually collect LMI to support program planners or people working in the field, others, use LMI for policy analysis and program planning purposes. Planners typically need LMI only on a periodic basis.

Figure 3.2 presents the views of end-users on how often they used LMI for career planning or looking for work. The biggest users were clients of contractors. Just over one-third felt they used LMI a lot, compared with one-quarter of post-secondary students and 10 percent of secondary students.

FIGURE 3.2
How Often LMI Was Used
Views of Secondary and Post-Secondary Students and Clients



All three groups of end-users used LMI to learn about the skills, education or training needed for specific occupations; to learn about training opportunities; and to learn about the general knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for any job. Post-secondary students and clients had a wider range of uses for LMI than did secondary students. Post-secondary students generally used LMI for specific career planning and education planning, while government clients were more likely to use LMI for finding employment.

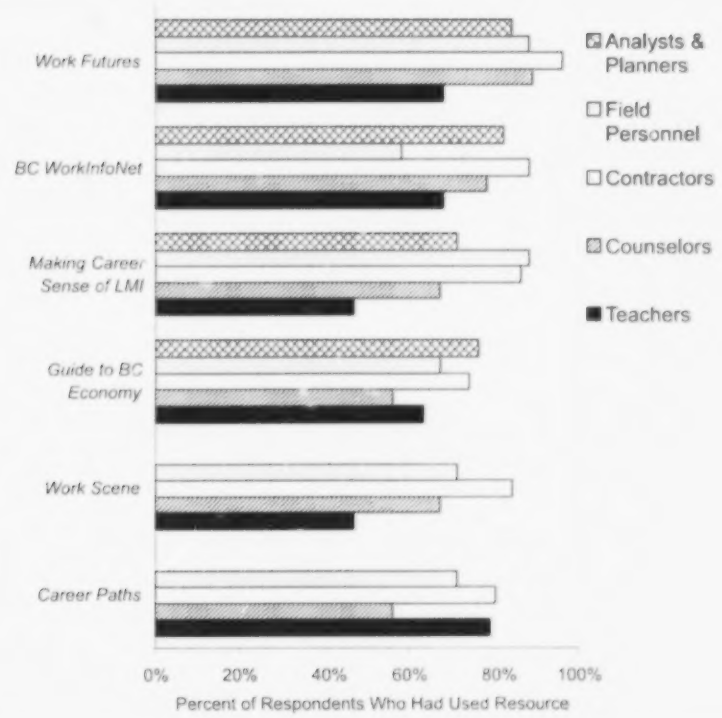
Respondents were also asked to indicate whether they had used specific resources. Although there was some variation from group to group, the resources used by most career practitioners, analysts and planners, on average, were:

- *Work Futures: British Columbia Occupational Outlooks*
- *BC WorkInfoNet* website
- *A Guide to the BC Economy and Labour Market*
- *Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information*
- *Work Scene: BC Work Futures for Youth*
- *Career Paths*

Figure 3.3 shows the percentage of career practitioners, analysts and planners in each group that had used each of these resources. Note that analysts and planners were not asked to rate either *Work Scene* or *Career Paths*, as these were intended for youth, and this group does not work with clients. Overall, contractors were bigger users of the resources than were any other group, followed closely by analysts and planners. Use by field personnel, teachers and counselors varied considerably depending on the resource.

Overall, *Work Futures* had been used by more respondents than any other resource. It had been used by over 80 percent of contractors, counselors, field personnel, analysts and planners, and about 70 percent of teachers. The *BC WorkInfoNet* website had similar high levels of usage; about 80 percent of analysts, planners, contractors, and counselors, and around 60 percent of field personnel and teachers had used the website.

FIGURE 3.3
Use of Selected LMI Resources
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners



Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information is a manual about how to use labour market information for career decision making. It also has a companion facilitator's guide that contains lesson plans and handouts. The manual had been used by the majority (three-quarters) of contractors, field personnel, analysts, planners and counselors, and by almost half the teachers surveyed.

A Guide to the BC Economy and Labour Market provides an overview of the BC economy and how industries have changed, as well as what is expected in the future. Its use was varied. About three-quarters of analysts, planners and contractors had used it, compared with about two-thirds of field personnel and around 60 percent of counselors and teachers.

Work Scene is a newer resource, released in the spring of 1998, and is a youth version of *Work Futures*. Its use was high among contractors (about 85 percent) and counselors and field personnel (about 75 percent), but just about one-half of the teachers had used it.

Career Paths is also aimed at youth. This resource is a newspaper published annually, that is also available at the *BC WorkInfoNet* website. The Initiative provided funding for the on-line version only. Use of it was high among contractors, teachers and field personnel, and moderate among counselors.

End-users (secondary students, post-secondary students, and government clients) had also been given a list of resources and asked to indicate which they had used. Use of the resources varied across the three groups. More post-secondary students used more resources than did either secondary students or clients. For post-secondary students, use ranged from a high of 67 percent on *Work Futures* to a low of 25 percent on a number of resources. For secondary students, the range was from a high of 54 percent for *Career Paths* to a low of 25 percent for the *Pacific Rim Institute of Tourism* website. Clients' use ranged from a high of 51 percent on *Work Futures* to a low of 27 percent on *Career Gateways* CD ROM.

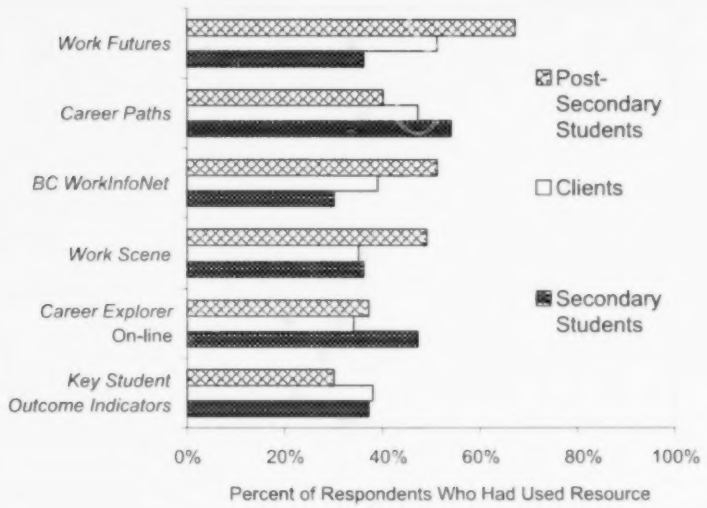
Over all three groups, the resources that were used most were:

- *Work Futures*
- *BC WorkInfoNet* website
- *Career Paths*
- *Career Explorer* on-line
- *Key Student Outcome Indicators for BC Colleges and Institutes*
- *Work Scene*

Figure 3.4 shows the percentage of end-users who had used each of these. Note that the pattern of usage varied across the three groups. While *Work Futures* was the most used resource for post-secondary students and clients, *Career Paths* was the most used resource for secondary students. *Career Paths* was used by almost as many clients and post-secondary students. The *BC WorkInfoNet* website was used by a larger proportion of post-secondary students than either secondary students or clients.

Figure 3.4 does not include resources that were popular with only one or two groups of end-users. The *Xplore Science Careers* CD ROM was a popular resource for secondary students and the *Guide to the BC Economy and Labour Market* was popular with clients. The *Pacific Rim Institute of Tourism* and *Getting Into the A.C.T.* websites were popular with clients, and to a lesser extent with secondary students.

FIGURE 3.4
Use of Selected LMI Resources
Views of Students and Clients



Access to LMI

Career practitioners (teachers, counselors, contractors and field personnel) had used a variety of ways to find out what LMI resources were available and how to get them. The most common sources they reported were:

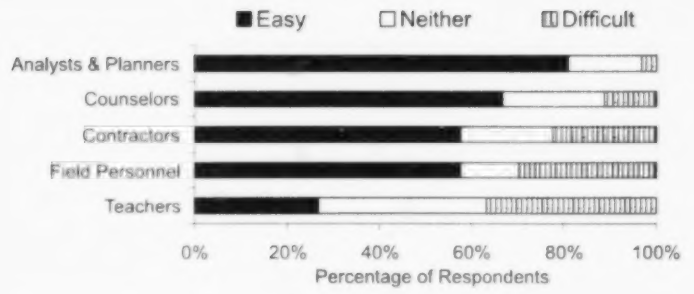
- Conferences, workshops and career fairs;
- Receiving announcements, brochures or actual resources;
- Word of mouth; and
- Searching the internet (including *BC WIN*).

In addition, teachers also learned of resources through career coordinators in their district, contractors also found out from federal or provincial personnel, and field personnel also found out from headquarters personnel. Overall, the majority (two-thirds to three-quarters) were satisfied with their knowledge about what LMI resources were available, with the exception of field personnel, where only 54 percent were satisfied.

Colleagues were the most common source of information about what LMI resources were available for analysts and planners, followed by the internet, and then announcements. Two-thirds of analysts and planners were satisfied with what they knew about what resources were available and how to get them.

Figure 3.5 presents the views of career practitioners, analysts and planners on their ease of access to LMI resources. Ease of access varied. About 80 percent of analysts and planners compared with one-quarter of post-secondary teachers had found access easy. Post-secondary counselors, contractors and field personnel fell between these two extremes, with between 55 and 65 percent having found access easy.

FIGURE 3.5
Ease of Access to LMI Resources
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners



The majority in each group felt that access had improved over the last few years. The improvement was rated as substantial by about 16 percent of analysts and planners, one-quarter of teachers and contractors, one-third of post-secondary counselors, and 42 percent of field personnel. The most common reasons for improvement was the use of the internet to access LMI, followed by an increase in the number of resources available.

According to career practitioners, access to resources had not been as good for students and clients as it had been for themselves, although the majority (three-quarters of field personnel and almost 90 percent of the others) felt that access had improved over the last few years, largely because of internet access. Career practitioners felt that students and clients had difficulty accessing resources because:

- They did not have the knowledge about how to find the resources;
- They had limited or no internet access, or lacked technology to access it;
- There was a lack of resources available for students or clients.

End-users often found out about LMI resources on their own. Other common sources were career counselors, teachers, and internet searches. Secondary and post-secondary students also used parents and friends, and post-secondary students frequently used the school library or resource centre. Clients used a greater variety of sources on a regular basis, including Employment Insurance Centres. End-users varied in how satisfied they were with what they knew about what LMI resources were available. Only 45 percent of secondary students were satisfied, compared with two-thirds of clients and 71 percent of post-secondary students. The views of end-users on ease of access to LMI resources are

shown in Figure 3.6. Most found access easy, or at least not difficult. Less than 20 percent in each group found access difficult.

FIGURE 3.6
Ease of Access to LMI Resources
Views of Students and Clients

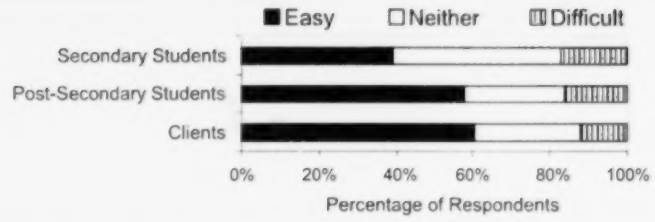
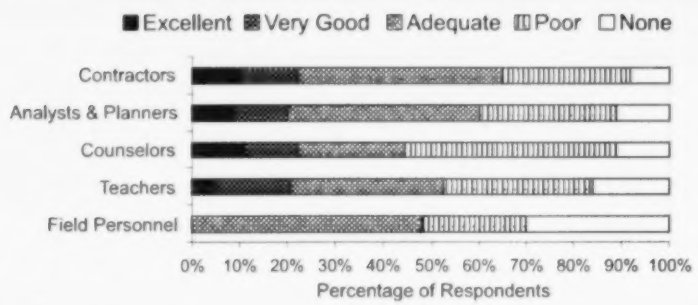


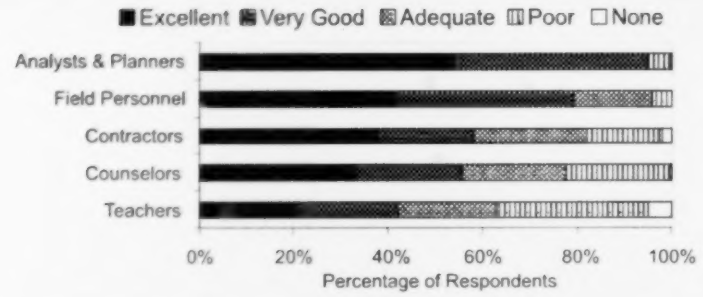
Figure 3.7 presents the ratings of career practitioners, analysts and planners on the adequacy of their budget to purchase LMI resources. As a group, contractors, analysts and planners were more likely than others to have a budget that was adequate or better, while post-secondary counselors and field personnel were least likely to have an adequate budget. Budget was seldom mentioned as a reason for difficulties in accessing LMI resources, though. This is probably because many used the internet, or had received resources at no charge.

FIGURE 3.7
Adequacy of Budget to Purchase LMI Resources
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners



A number of the Initiative's projects were to make existing or new LMI resources available on the internet. Hence, all respondents were asked about their internet access and the access of their clients or students. Ratings on the adequacy of their access to the internet to locate LMI are provided in Figure 3.8. At least 80 percent of respondents in each group rated access to the internet as adequate or better, except for teachers, where only two-thirds felt access was at least adequate. Figure 3.9 provides their ratings on the adequacy of internet access for their clients or students. About two-thirds of respondents rated access for their students or clients as adequate or better.

FIGURE 3.8
Ratings on Adequacy of Access to the Internet
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners



Technology can limit access for some respondents, especially for students and clients. Lack of computers and lack of or inadequate internet access prevented access to internet resources. Lack of computers, or lack of a CD ROM drive prevented access to CD ROM resources. Schools may not have had sufficient internet capability to have an entire class work on-line at the same time. They may not have had the ability to run a CD ROM through their server, preventing class use of CD ROM materials. Some contractors and government employees, both in the field and in headquarters, did not have CD ROM drives and hence could not use CD ROM resources. In most cases, these people did have internet access.

FIGURE 3.9
Ratings on Adequacy of Students/Clients' Access to the Internet
Views of Career Practitioners

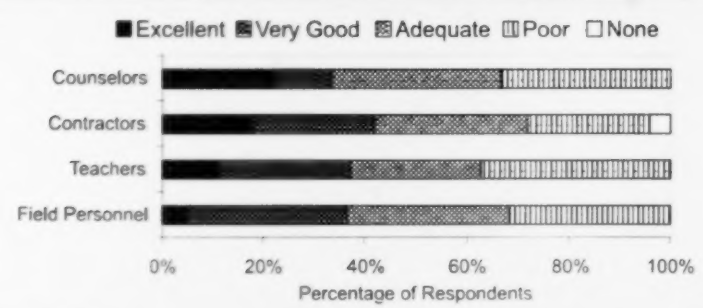
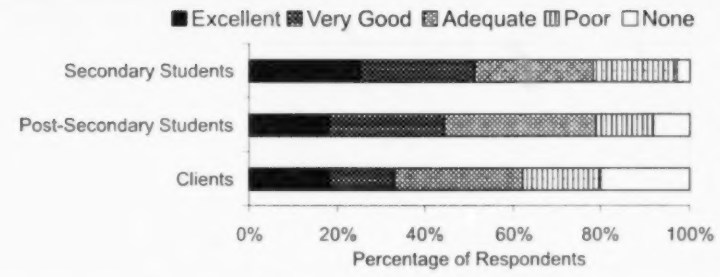


Figure 3.10 shows end-users' ratings on the adequacy of their internet access. About one-half of secondary and post-secondary students and one-third of clients felt that their access was either very good or excellent. Teachers and counselors had underestimated the adequacy of access for their students, while contractors had overestimated it.

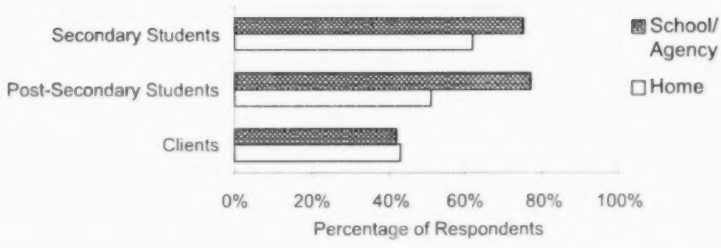
There were two locations used the most by end-users for access to the internet: the school or agency where they were surveyed, and their home. To determine whether users had internet access at home or their school or agency, responses to the question: "*where do you access the internet?*" were used. Users were asked to indicate how often, if at all, they accessed the internet at a variety of locations. Responses of: "*Hardly ever*", "*Once in a while*" and "*On a regular basis*" were combined to get an indication of where they had access, even if they did not use it often. Figure 3.11 presents the percentage of users in each group who had used each location at all.

FIGURE 3.10
Ratings on Adequacy of Access to the Internet
Views of Students and Clients



A high proportion of all end-users had access to the internet in their home: 40 percent of clients, about 50 percent of post-secondary students, and around 60 percent of secondary students. An even higher proportion of students had internet access at their school (about 75 percent). About 40 percent of clients had internet access at the agency where they were surveyed and about 40 percent used places of public access, such as public libraries.

FIGURE 3.11
Where End-Users Accessed the Internet



Barriers to Effective Use

The extent to which barriers limited effective use of LMI was explored by asking respondents to indicate what factors, if any, had limited their ability to effectively use labour market information. Respondents who dealt with clients were also asked to indicate what factors limited their clients' ability.

Lack of time was a limiting factor for career practitioners, analysts and planners, especially time to find and use the information. For teachers, lack of time to learn how to use the information and lack of training on how to use it were even more important factors than was lack of time to use the material. For counselors, contractors and field personnel, lack of time to learn how to use labour market information and lack of training on how to use it were almost as important as was lack of time to use the material.

Career practitioners felt that different factors limited their clients' ability to effectively use labour market information. Lack of training and lack of knowledge about where to find labour market information were the two factors that respondents felt most applied to their clients/students, and to a lesser extent, lack of knowledge about what labour market information is and how to use it. Teachers also felt that students' ability to use LMI effectively was limited by lack of time to learn how to use the information, and lack of time to use it.

Time was a limiting factor according to both secondary and post-secondary students. For secondary and post-secondary students, the barriers were lack of knowledge and time to find the information as well as lack of time to use it and to learn how to use it. For clients, barriers were lack of knowledge about where to find the information, and not being able to get the information they needed. The factor common to all three groups was lack of knowledge about where to find LMI resources, which affected about half the students and clients at least sometimes.

Conclusions on Use and Access

The following conclusions are based on the findings collected on use of and access to LMI:

- Awareness of LMI and its uses was good and has been growing. Career practitioners, analysts, planners and end-users were making appropriate use of labour market information.

- The internet, including the *BC WorkInfoNet* website, was a common way that career practitioners, analysts, planners and end-users found out about resources, but generally intended audiences sought information about what was available in an *ad hoc* fashion. More communication is needed to increase awareness of what resources are available and how to obtain then.

- A variety of methods were used for making LMI resources available to their audiences, including providing print copies free of charge, and internet and/or CD ROM versions

had been created for a number of resources. The internet was also used to provide information on how to obtain resources. These methods were adequate and appropriate to the needs and resources of the intended users.

- Intended audiences have had reasonably good access to LMI resources, but factors do exist that limit access for some. Lack of appropriate technology was a barrier to access for some intended users, especially clients and, to a lesser extent, teachers. Internet resources and CD ROM resources require a computer with internet access or a CD ROM drive, which were not available for all potential users. Lack of budget to purchase LMI resources had limited access for some, but since many of the resources created by the Initiative had been provided free, budget was not a significant barrier.

- Lack of time was one factor that applied to the majority of respondents in limiting their ability to effectively use labour market information. Career practitioners, analysts and planners felt that time limited their ability to find the information and to use it effectively. Many also felt that time limited their ability to learn how to use the information, as did lack of training on its use.

- Lack of training, and lack of knowledge about labour market information and how to use it were considered by career practitioners as more significant limiting factors than was time for their students and clients. The students and clients themselves had found that lack of knowledge about where to find the information was a factor, but students found lack of time to be a factor as well.

3.2 Meeting User Needs

The findings presented in this section address issues regarding how well the needs of users were met with respect to LMI. The specific issues addressed were:

- Are the intended audiences for specific resources, using the resources intended for their use?
- Are the LMI products and resources useful and do they meet the needs of a diverse range of intended users?
- Which products and resources are most useful to which groups of users?

Meeting the Needs of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners

All career practitioners, analysts and planners were given a list of resources and asked to indicate whether they had used them and, for those they had used, to rate the usefulness of the resource. As presented in the previous section, the resources used by most career practitioners, analysts and planners, on average, were:

- *Work Futures: British Columbia Occupational Outlooks*
- *BC WorkInfoNet* website
- *A Guide to the BC Economy and Labour Market*
- *Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information*

- *Work Scene: BC Work Futures for Youth*
- *Career Paths*

Figure 3.12 presents the usefulness ratings for these six resources. For simplicity of presentation, ratings have been collapsed into four categories: useful, adequate, inadequate and don't know. The "very useful" category is a combination of ratings of "very useful" and "extremely useful", while the "inadequate" category is a combination of "somewhat inadequate" and "very inadequate". A rating has been interpreted as useful if the resource had been rated as either "adequate", "very useful", or "extremely useful". The actual ratings are provided in the *Detailed Findings* report.

FIGURE 3.12
Ratings of Usefulness of Six Popular LMI Resources
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners

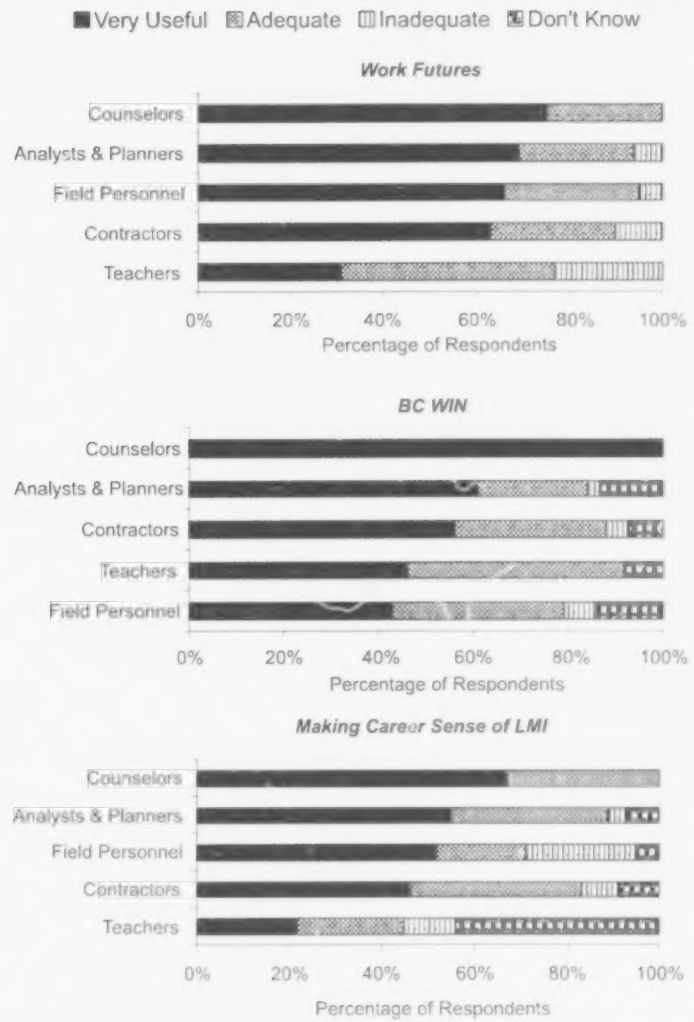
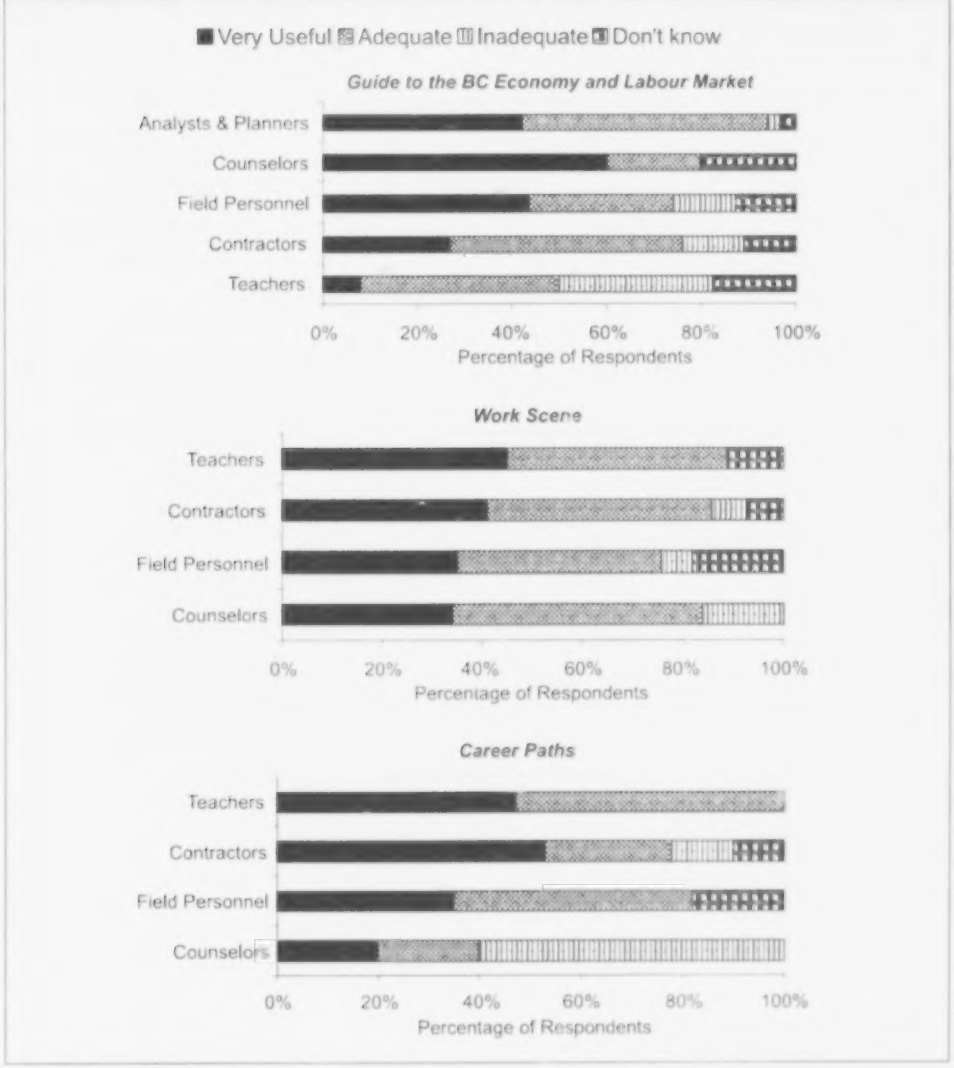


FIGURE 3.12 (continued)
Ratings of Usefulness of Six Popular LMI Resources
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners



In addition to having a high number of users, *Work Futures* was also viewed as useful by a majority of users. It was considered by many as the first place to start research for career planning. It has also been useful for program planners. Teachers were the only group who were less likely to find it useful, with just over 20 percent rating it as inadequate to their needs.

The *BC WorkInfoNet* website was also popular with respondents. Most found it useful, with a high proportion rating it as very useful. Very few rated it as inadequate. Some, however, were not able to rate the usefulness of the site.

The manual, *Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information*, received mixed reviews from respondents, as did *A Guide to the BC Economy and Labour Market*. Both were most popular with counselors, analysts and planners, and least popular with teachers. A high proportion of teachers were not able to rate the usefulness of *Making Career Sense*.

Work Scene and *Career Paths* are both targeted to a youth audience. Both were viewed as useful by most teachers who had used them, although many more teachers had used *Career Paths* than had used *Work Scene*, possibly because *Career Paths* has been produced for a number of years, while *Work Scene* was only released in Spring 1998. Most of the career practitioners also found *Work Scene* to be useful and most contractors and field personnel also found *Career Paths* useful. Counselors were the least likely of all groups to find *Career Paths* useful; 60 percent rated it as inadequate to their needs.

Although a number of other resources were also rated as useful by a majority of their users, the number of users overall was often small. Some were relatively new and not in widespread use at the time of data collection, and others are aimed at specific audiences and hence had only a small number of users. Findings on some of these resources are highlighted below.

Two other resources that were popular among teachers were *Motiv8* and *Career Explorer* on-line, both targeted to youth. About two-thirds of the teachers had used these and the majority found each to be useful. Anywhere from one-half to two-thirds of the contractors used a variety of resources that were targeted to youth: *Career Explorer* on-line, *Motiv8*, *Realm*, and *What Works*. Anywhere from 16 to 22 percent could not rate their usefulness, but the majority of those that did, had found the resources to be useful.

About one-half of the teachers, contractors and field personnel had used the new CD ROM tool, *Career Gateways*, or its predecessor, the *Virtual LMI Toolkit*. A large number could not rate its usefulness, but the majority of those that did, had found it useful.

The other resources used by about three-quarters of counselors were the student outcomes series: *BC Student Outcome Indicators for BC Colleges and Institutes; BC Student Outcomes: Job Destinations of Former College and Institute Students;* and *BC Student Outcomes: Survey Results by Program for Former College and Institute Students*. They were used by at least two-thirds of the group, and found to be useful by the majority. The *Job Destinations* report was given the highest ratings of all three, with about 70 percent rating it as very or extremely useful.

The student outcomes series was also used by about one-half of the contracted services providers. Fewer had found these resources to be useful than did counselors, and one-quarter to one-third had rated them as inadequate. About one-half to two-thirds of field personnel had used items in the series, but up to one-quarter could not rate their usefulness. Of those that did, almost all had found them useful. About three-quarters of the analysts and planners had used the outcomes series and 80 percent or more had found them useful.

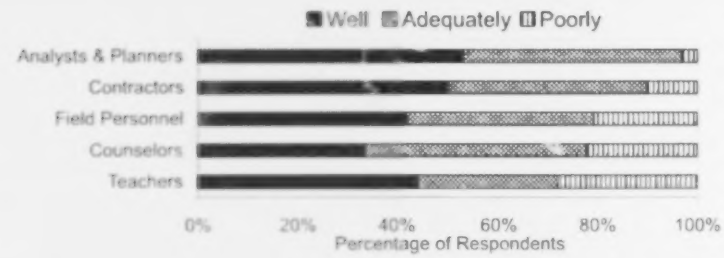
One of the newest in the student outcomes series is *On Track*, a report that provides outcome information on former students of private training programs in BC. No counselors had used

this report, but one-quarter of the contractors and about one-half of the field personnel, analysts and planners had. Almost one-third of the contractors and field personnel could not rate its usefulness, but about 54 percent of contractors and 61 percent of field personnel had found it useful. About three-quarters of analysts and planners had found the resource useful.

Analysts and planners were also asked about two other new student outcomes resources: *Adult Basic Education Student Outcomes* and *English as a Second Language Employment Outcomes*. Between 40 and 50 percent had used the resources, but about 40 percent could not rate their usefulness. The majority of the rest had found them useful.

Figure 3.13 presents respondents' views on how well LMI resources had met their needs overall. In the Figure, the response categories "very well" and "extremely well" were combined into the "well" category in the chart. The response categories "poorly" and "extremely poorly" were combined into the "poorly" category.

FIGURE 3.13
How Well LMI Resources Met Needs Overall
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners



Generally, career practitioners, analysts and planners felt that their LMI needs were met by the resources they had used. The features that were most frequently liked about resources were:

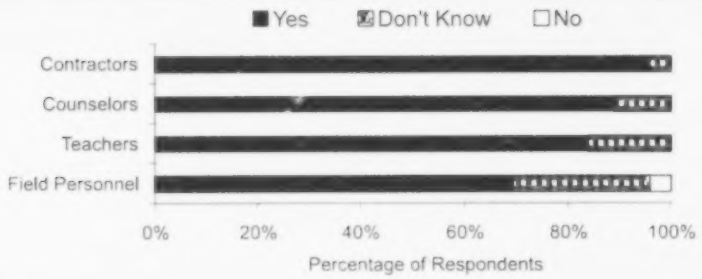
- User-friendly layout of information;
- Concise, comprehensive content with details about specific careers;
- Good range of resources for different needs;
- Relevancy of information;
- Current, reliable information.

A sizable minority (from 20 to 25 percent) of field personnel, counselors and teachers felt the resources poorly met their needs. Resources were not satisfactory for teachers if the material was too difficult or assumed too much understanding of LMI, or was not classroom-ready. Counselors were not satisfied with resources if they were too general or did not have local LMI. Lack of currency of information or relevancy to client, difficulty or literacy level, and lack of local LMI were concerns of contractors. Field personnel found resources not satisfactory if the information was not organized, was too general for

clients or not current, or lacked local LMI. Lack of local LMI, too much technical information, or lack of analysis and synthesis were concerns of analysts and planners.

Career practitioners were asked whether they would use LMI resources again, based on their experience using them. These ratings are provided in Figure 3.14. Almost all contractors and most counselors and teachers would use them again. About 70 percent of field personnel would, but about 25 percent did not know. Only a few field personnel said that they would not use the resources again.

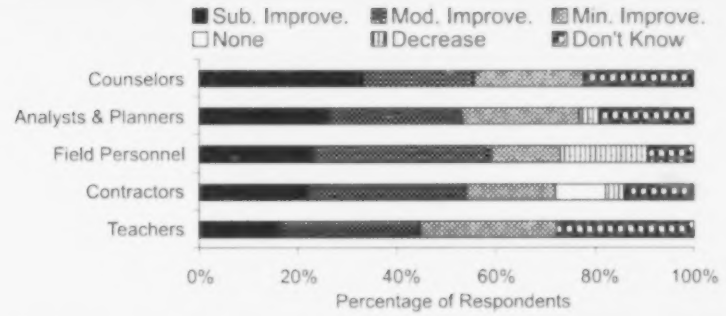
FIGURE 3.14
Whether They Would Use LMI Resources Again
Views of Career Practitioners



Analysts and planners were not asked whether they would use LMI resources again, since for many this was a requirement of their job. Instead, they were asked what contribution the LMI resources had made to their work. All felt the resources had made some contribution, and almost 40 percent felt the contribution had been substantial.

Career practitioners, analysts and planners were asked whether there had been any changes over the last few years in the quality of LMI products and services to meet their needs. These ratings are shown in Figure 3.15. A sizable minority (from 10 to 25 percent) did not know. At least three-quarters felt that quality had improved, and around one-half of these felt that the improvement had been moderate or substantial.

FIGURE 3.15
Changes in Quality of LMI Resources to Meet Their Needs
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners



Meeting the Needs of End-Users

End-users (secondary students, post-secondary students, and government clients) had also been given a list of resources and asked to indicate which they had used, and to rate the usefulness of those resources. As reported in the previous section, over all three groups, the resources that were used most were:

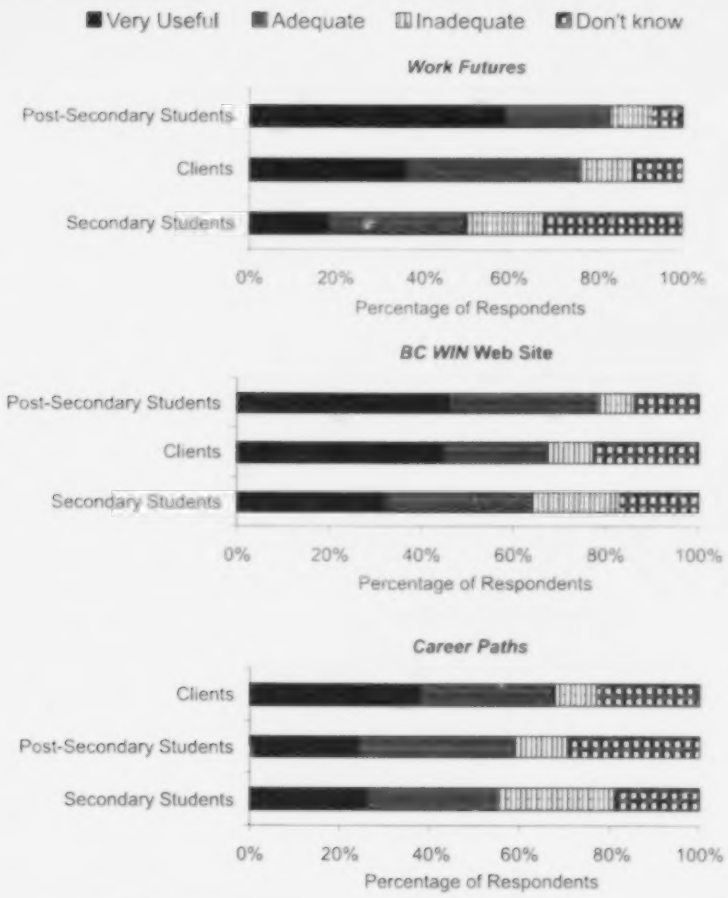
- *Work Futures*
- *BC WorkInfoNet* website
- *Career Paths*
- *Career Explorer* on-line
- *Key Student Outcome Indicators for BC Colleges and Institutes*
- *Work Scene*

Figure 3.16 shows the usefulness ratings of end-users who had used these six resources. For the figure, ratings of "very" and "extremely useful" were collapsed into "very useful", and "somewhat" and "very inadequate" were collapsed into "inadequate." Chapter VII of the *Detailed Findings* report gives the actual ratings. As described earlier, a resource was considered useful if rated as adequate, very useful, or extremely useful.

The majority of all groups of end-users who have used *Work Futures* had found it useful. It was most popular with post-secondary students, with 60 percent finding it very useful. About one-third of the secondary students and about 10 percent of the clients could not rate its usefulness. Between 10 and 20 percent had found it inadequate.

Although use of the *BC WorkInfoNet* website varied considerably across groups, the majority (between 65 and 75 percent) of those who had used it had found it useful. A sizable number (from about 15 to 25 percent) could not rate its usefulness. About 20 percent of secondary students and 10 percent of post-secondary students and clients had found it inadequate.

FIGURE 3.16
Ratings of Usefulness of Six Popular LMI Resources
Views of Students and Clients

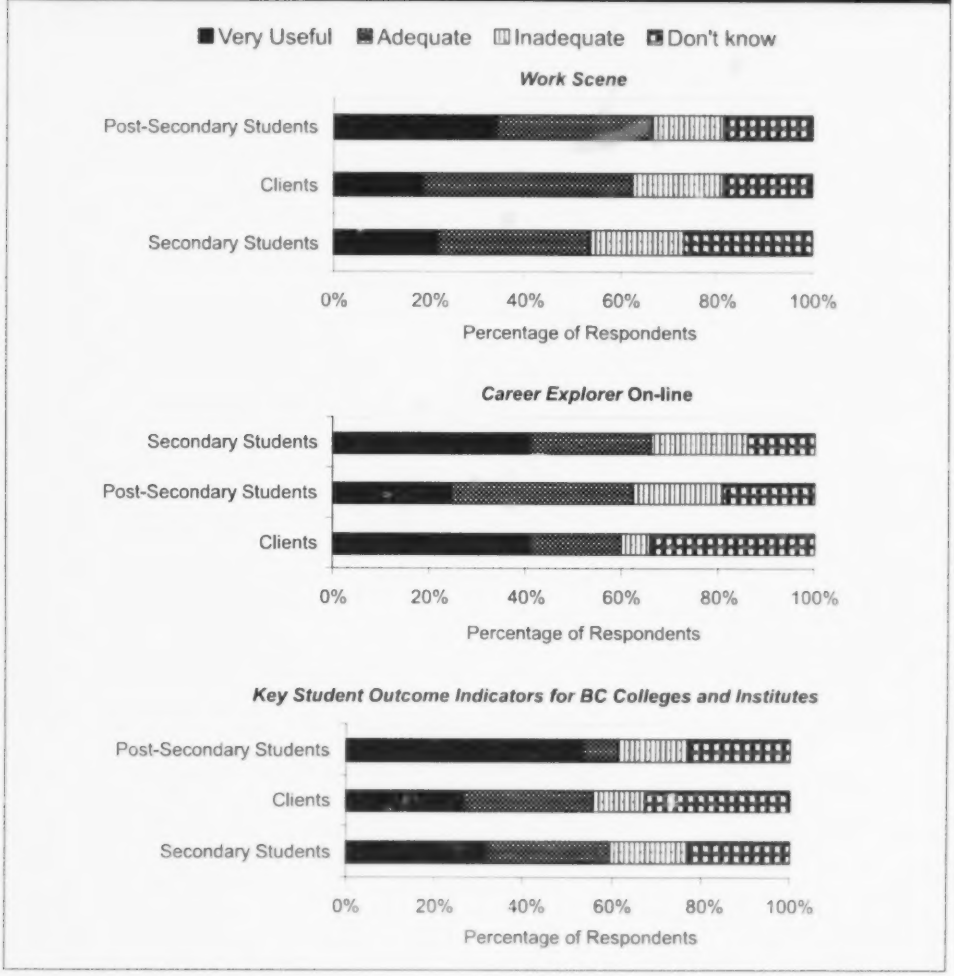


Career Paths had broad appeal, with from 55 to 68 percent of its users having found it useful. Again, a sizable number (from 20 to 30 percent) could not rate it. Although more than one-half of secondary students found it useful, about one-quarter found it inadequate.

Work Scene, the youth version of *Work Futures*, was not found to be as useful as was *Work Futures* by most of its users, although the majority had found it to be useful. About 15 to 20 percent found it inadequate. From 20 to 25 percent could not rate it.

Career Explorer on-line was found to be useful by about 60 percent of all end-users who had used it. About 20 percent of secondary and post-secondary students had found it inadequate. Almost 40 percent of clients could not rate it. About 60 percent of end-users had found the resource, *Key Student Outcome Indicators for BC Colleges and Institutes*,

FIGURE 3.16 (continued)
Ratings of Usefulness of Six Popular LMI Resources
Views of Students and Clients



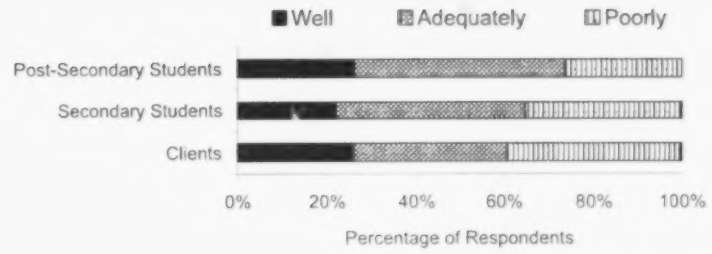
useful. Between 10 and 20 percent had found it inadequate and between 20 and 30 percent could not rate it.

Figure 3.17 presents the views of end-users on how well LMI resources met their needs overall. Between 60 and 75 percent of end-users felt that the resources had met their needs adequately or well. Around 40 percent of secondary students and clients, and 25 percent of post-secondary students felt that their needs had not been adequately met.

End-users were asked whether, based on their experience using them, they would use the resources again if doing career planning or looking for work. These ratings are provided in Figure 3.18. Almost three-quarters of post-secondary students, two-thirds of clients and about one-half of the secondary students would use the resources again. A high proportion

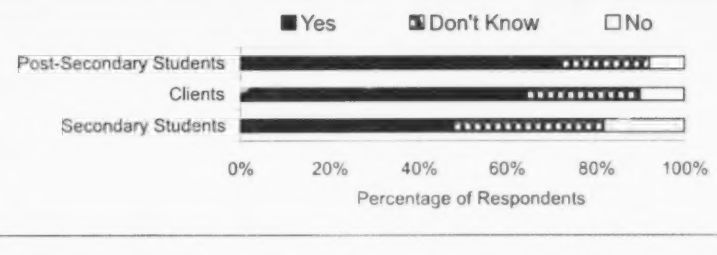
of the rest did not know. About 10 percent of clients and almost 20 percent of secondary students would not use them again.

FIGURE 3.17
How Well LMI Resources Met Needs Overall
Views of Students and Clients



Career practitioners and field personnel were also asked to rate how well LMI resources had met the needs of their clients or students overall. These ratings are shown in Figure 3.19. The majority felt that the LMI resources had met their clients'/students' needs, but anywhere from about one-fifth to one-third of respondents in each group felt that the resources poorly met the needs of the clients/students. Teachers were more likely than others to rate the resources as having poorly met their students' needs. These views are similar to those expressed by the end-users themselves.

FIGURE 3.18
Whether They Would Use LMI Resources Again
Views of Students and Clients



Career practitioners were also asked whether there had been any changes in the quality of LMI resources to meet the needs of their clients or students. These ratings are provided in Figure 3.20. A large number (between 10 and 25 percent) did not know, but about three-quarters felt that quality had improved, with more than 45 percent rating the improvement as moderate or substantial.

FIGURE 3.19
How Well LMI Resources Had Met Needs of Their Clients/Students Overall
Views of Career Practitioners

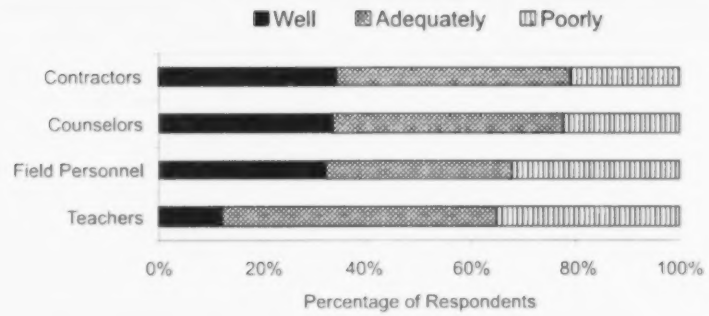
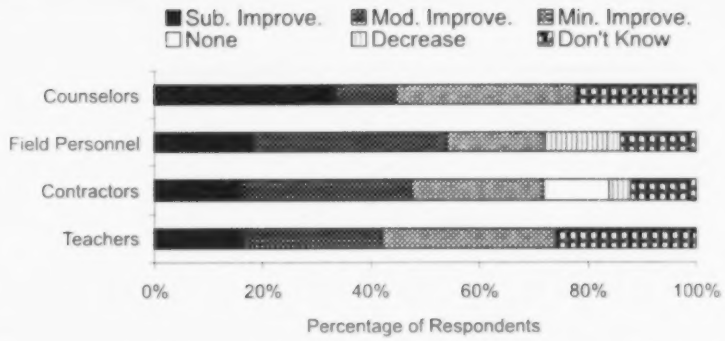


FIGURE 3.20
Changes in Quality of LMI Resources to Meet the Needs of Their Clients/Students
Views of Career Practitioners



Conclusions on Meeting Users' Needs

The following conclusions are offered based on the findings on meeting user needs.

- The use of specific resources by the intended audiences varied depending on the resource and the audience. The biggest users of the resources were the career practitioners who worked directly with clients, particularly the contracted service providers. End-users, secondary students, post-secondary students and government clients, had used the resources less than had career practitioners.

- Some of the newer resources were not in as widespread use as were some of the resources that had been created at the beginning of the Initiative.

- A sizable minority of intended users had access to resources, but had not used them enough to be able to rate their usefulness. Often, intended users had not had the time to figure out how to make use of a resource.

- There were three resources that stood out as being the most used, and most useful: *Work Futures*, the *BC WorkInfoNet* website and *Career Paths*. These resources were used and found useful by end-users, career practitioners, analysts and planners.

- The LMI resources that, in addition to the above three, were most useful to the greatest number of career practitioners, analysts and planners were:

  — *A Guide to the BC Economy and Labour Market*
  — *Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information*
  — *Guide to the BC Economy and Labour Market*
  — *Work Scene: BC Work Futures for Youth*

- The resources, in addition to *Work Futures*, the *BC WorkInfoNet* website and *Career Paths* that were most useful to the greatest number of end-users were:

  — *Work Scene: BC Work Futures for Youth*
  — *Career Explorer* on-line
  — *Key Student Outcome Indicators*

- Some other resources that were useful to smaller audiences were:

  — For career practitioners working with youth: *Career Explorer* on-line, *Motiv8*, *Realm*, and *What Works*.

  — For people interested in post-secondary student outcomes, the series: *BC Student Outcome Indicators for BC Colleges and Institutes; BC Student Outcomes: Job Destinations of Former College and Institute Students;* and *BC Student Outcomes: Survey Results by Program for Former College and Institute Students*.

  — New additions to the student outcomes series, which have had fewer users but were useful to those who had used them: *On Track, Adult Basic Education Student Outcomes* and *English as a Second Language Employment Outcomes*.

  — A new resource, *Career Gateways*, or its predecessor, the *Virtual LMI Toolkit* has had fewer users, but was useful for the teachers, contractors and field personnel who had used it.

- The range of resources that were developed met the needs of a diverse range of intended users. Overall, the needs of analysts and planners were met and the LMI resources they used made a contribution to their work. The needs of contractors were met, and to a lesser extent for field personnel, post-secondary counselors and secondary school teachers. Most career practitioners would use the resources again.

- The needs of end-users were not as well met as were the needs of career practitioners, analysts and planners. None the less, the majority of end-users felt that their needs had been met and they would use the resources again.

- The quality of LMI resources has improved over the last few years. The majority of analysts and planners as well as career practitioners felt that the quality of resources to meet their needs, and the needs of clients and students, had improved moderately or substantially.

4. Achievement of Objectives

The findings presented in the previous chapter demonstrate that during the course of the Initiative, users' access to LMI resources has improved, as has the quality of LMI resources to meet their needs. This chapter examines the incremental effects of the LMI Strategic Initiative, that is, it addresses whether or not the Initiative caused these improvements.

To examine the incremental effects of the LMI Strategic Initiative, the findings summarized in this chapter are organized around the four objectives of the Initiative, to examine whether or not the Initiative has achieved its objectives of:

- improved labour market information products and services to better meet the needs of a diverse range of users;
- increased access to labour market information resources that meet the needs of a diverse range of users;
- enhanced coordination in the development, production and dissemination of labour market information; and
- increased integration of labour market information into career planning and decision making.

The findings presented in each section include a description of the relevant activities of the Initiative; respondents' views on whether there have been any changes, if not presented previously; and a discussion of the Initiative's contribution to any observed changes.

4.1 Improved LMI Products and Services

This section summarizes the findings on whether the Initiative has been effective in:

- improving the quality of labour market information;
- improving outcome and student flow information for post-secondary education and training programs;
- increasing the amount and type of community and sector level labour market information; and
- improving products and services to better meet the needs of a diverse range of users.

The Products and Services Produced by the LMI Strategic Initiative

The Initiative provided funding for a wide range of LMI products and services, some for general audiences and some for specific audiences such as youth, or analysts and planners. Examples of resources for a general audience are:

- *Work Futures: British Columbia Occupational Outlooks*
- *A Guide to the BC Economy and Labour Market*
- *Does it Pay to Change Jobs? An Economic Analysis of Job Mobility in Canada and British Columbia*

A number of the existing resources providing outcome information about BC students were improved and new ones were created, such as:

- *On Track: Private Training Outcomes*
- *Adult Basic Education Student Outcomes*
- *English as a Second Language Employment Outcomes*

A variety of other products were developed to address specific needs, such as the following:

- *Work Scene: BC Work Futures for Youth.* A simplified version of *Work Futures* that is intended to appeal to a younger audience.

- *What Can You Do with a UNBC Degree?* A website for students and potential students to learn about the occupational potential of various post-secondary education programs at UNBC and elsewhere.

- *CD ROM: Xplore Science Careers.* Profiles eight women in various science and technology careers to encourage teenage girls to consider careers in these areas.

Some products were specifically developed for the analyst or program planner, such as:

- *BC Regional Employment Projection* econometric model
- *Intermediate Skills Development in British Columbia: New Policy and Research Directions*

A few resources were developed about specific sectors, such as:

- *Tourism Career Connections* Website
- *Getting into the Act: A Practical Guide to Arts Careers Trends in British Columbia:* Brochure and Website
- *Food for Thought...Careers in Agriculture*

A variety of community projects were funded to collect or disseminate local labour market information, including:

- *Central Island Employment Net* Website
- Community Skills Centres *Get Web Help*
- *Learning Works* Web Guide
- *Comox Valley Community Information System* Website

Users' Views on Improvement

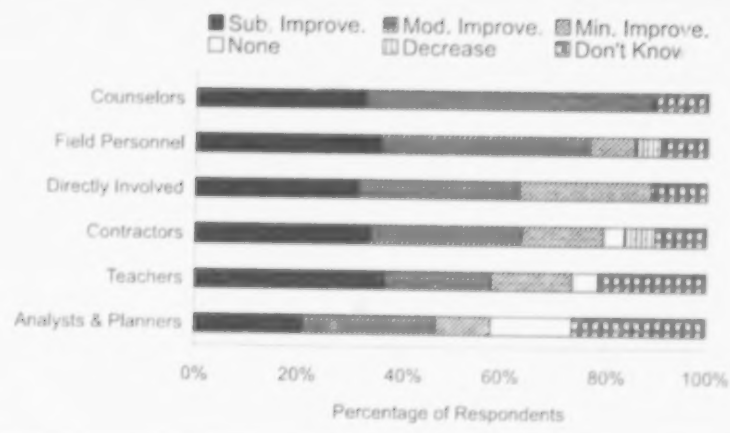
In the previous chapter, the views of users were presented on how well the LMI resources had met their needs. The findings presented there indicated that a diverse range of needs were being met by the range of resources that were available. In addition, the quality of LMI resources had improved over the last few years to better meet the needs of career practitioners, analysts, planners and end-users.

All career practitioners, analysts and planners were also asked to indicate whether there had been any changes in the quality of:

- labour market information in general;
- outcome and student flow information for post-secondary education and training programs;
- local labour market information; and
- sector level labour market information.

These views are presented in Figures 4.1 to 4.4. Note that the analysts and planners represented in the graph consist only of the analysts and planners who were not directly involved in delivery of the Initiative. As explained in Chapter 1, half the analysts and planners were directly involved in the Initiative. The views of this group, referred to as Directly Involved, are presented separately in the graph. The Directly Involved group had more knowledge about the activities of the Initiative, and because of their involvement in the collection and dissemination of labour market information, were likely to be more knowledgeable about what LMI was available, and how it had changed. Hence, for this chapter, their results are presented separately from those of the analysts and planners who were not involved. In the previous chapter, the findings were combined with those of analysts and planners. The detailed findings for both sub-groups are presented in the *Detailed Findings* report.

FIGURE 4.1
Changes in Quality of Labour Market Information in General Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners

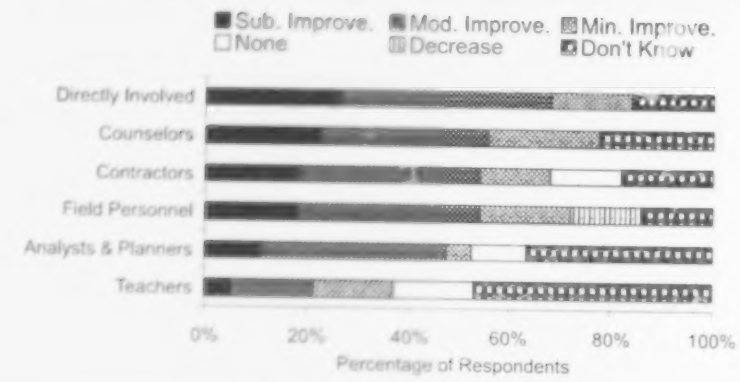


The majority of respondents felt that there had been improvements in the quality of labour market information in general, as presented in Figure 4.1. Most counselors and field personnel felt that the improvement had been moderate to substantial. Analysts and planners who had not been involved in the Initiative were less likely than other respondents to indicate an improvement; only about one-half felt that labour market information had improved in general and about 15 percent felt that there had been no change.

Figure 4.2 shows that the majority of each group of respondents, with the exception of teachers, felt that the quality of student outcome information had improved. At least one-half of each group, except for teachers, felt the improvement had been moderate or substantial. Only about 45 percent of teachers felt there had been any improvement, but about one-half did not know. There was also a high proportion of respondents in the other groups who did not know, ranging from about 15 percent for field personnel to almost 40 percent for analysts and planners who had not been involved. In addition, about 15 percent of teachers and contractors and 10 percent of analysts and planners who had not been involved felt that there had been no change.

At least one-half of the respondents in each group felt that the quality of sector-specific LMI had improved, but many did not know. (See Figure 4.3.) Fewer respondents felt that local labour market information had improved compared with the other types of labour market information. Most of those involved in the Initiative felt there had been at least a minimal improvement, as did about 55 to 60 percent of counselors, contractors and field personnel. About 45 percent of teachers, analysts and planners who had not been involved felt there had been improvement. Only about 25 to 45 percent of each group felt that there had been a moderate or substantial improvement. A sizable minority of each group (ranging from 11 to 26 percent) felt there had been no change. In addition, about

FIGURE 4.2
Changes in Quality of Student Outcome Information
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners



10 percent of counselors and 20 percent of contractors and field personnel felt that there had been a decrease.

The Initiative's Contribution

The findings presented in the previous chapter, together with the findings just presented, indicate that there has been an increase in the quality of labour market information in general, as well as for specific types of labour market information. To prove that the Initiative caused some of this improvement we would need to know what change, if any, would have taken place without the Initiative. Since some LMI products and resources were available before the Initiative began, it is reasonable to assume that there would have been some activity in this area, even without the Initiative.

FIGURE 4.3
Changes in Quality of Sector-Specific Labour Market Information
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners

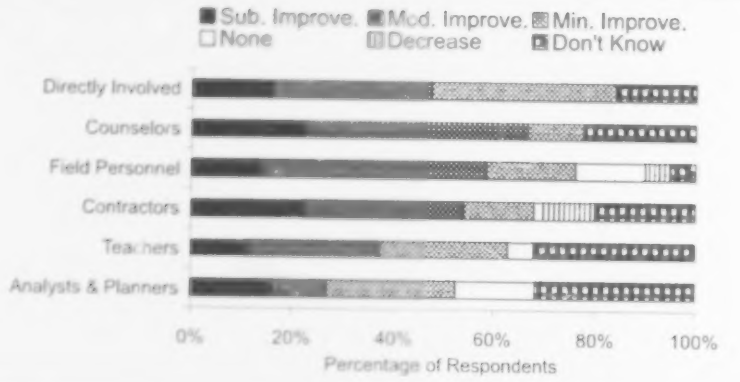
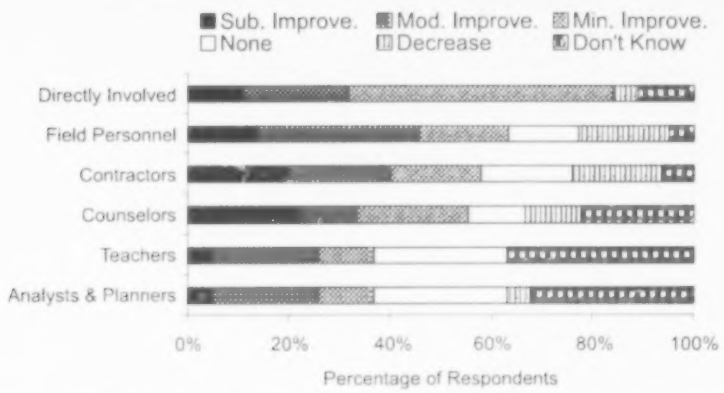


FIGURE 4.4
Changes in Quality of Local Labour Market Information
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners



Indeed, some of the products and resources that respondents are using were not created by the Initiative. *Career Paths* is a good example. It is widely used and found to be useful. It was not funded by the LMI Strategic Initiative, however. The Initiative only provided funding for putting *Career Paths* on-line. There are other examples where the Initiative only provided funding for an on-line version, or provided only part of the funding for a project. It is not easy, therefore, to even separate the activities of the Initiative from the activities that were not funded by the Initiative.

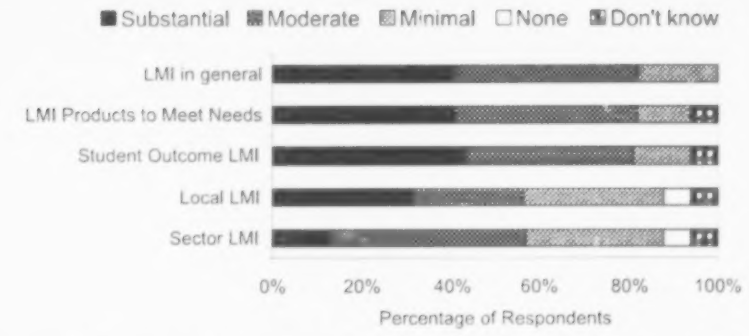
The Initiative was created at a time when there was an increasing concern with labour market issues. In fact, it is this concern that led to the creation of the Initiative. It is possible that even without the Initiative, the increased interest in labour market issues would have led to an increase in activity around the collection, production and dissemination of labour market information. There is no way to know how much of an increase would have occurred, or what would have been the result of any increased activity, because it is not possible to prove what would have happened without the Initiative.

Since a comparison of what would have happened without the Initiative is not possible, converging lines of evidence are needed to establish the Initiative's contribution to the improved quality. One source of information are the views of the analysts and planners who had been involved in the Initiative about the contribution, if any, that the Initiative made to the improvement in quality. Although it could be argued that those involved in the Initiative could be biased in its favour, they are also in the best position to know what the activities of the Initiative have been. Respondents in the other groups would often not know whether the resources they were using were produced by the Initiative. In fact, respondents were often unaware of the names of the resources and had to identify the resources they were using by looking at them before they could rate them. The views of those involved on the Initiative's contribution must be combined with other information.

such as the views of end-users that were presented in Chapter 3, as well as information about the Initiative's activities.

The views of those who were involved in the Initiative are provided in Figure 4.5. Those involved felt that the Initiative had made a moderate or substantial contribution to the improved quality of labour market information in general, of products and services to meet their needs, and of student outcome labour market information. Fewer felt that the Initiative had made as great a contribution to the improved quality of local and sector-specific labour market information. Examples of improved quality of LMI that respondents provided included resources like *Work Futures*, and the *BC WorkInfoNet* website and the student outcome series. These are among the highest profile activities of the Initiative.

FIGURE 4.5
The Initiative's Contribution to Improved Quality
Views of Analysts and Planners Involved in the Initiative



During the Initiative, the level of activity related to the collection, production and dissemination of LMI increased considerably, with a corresponding increase in the quality of labour market information. Much of the activity was the work of the Initiative, in whole or in part.

There are two areas where the Initiative was less active: sector-specific labour market information and local labour market information. Only a few sector-specific projects were funded by the Initiative: the *Tourism Carrier Connections* website, the *Getting into the A.C.T.* brochure and website and a resource of the agri-food sector. In addition to these specific sectors, *Work Futures* provides labour market information on a wide range of sectors.

The Initiative had more activity in the area of local labour market information, but these were small projects scattered throughout the province. Some of these are profiled in Chapter 2. In total, the Initiative funded over a dozen projects related to local labour market information. Most of these activities are only known at the local level. The involvement of the LMI in their funding may not be known even locally. In addition, the

Initiative funded the creation of the regional employment projection model, which is intended to predict impacts of changes in the local economy on local employment. This is a new model, still undergoing development, so it is not well known. During the course of the Initiative, HRDC underwent a major restructuring and reduced the level of Labour Market Information Analysts (LMIAs) employed at the local HRCCs. Since LMIAs are responsible for collection of local labour market information for their HRCC area, the reduction in their numbers has resulted in a reduction in the availability of local LMI, which has been noticed and commented upon by some respondents.

The LMI Initiative did cause an increase in activity because it was able to provide funding. The impact of the end of this funding is being felt now, with a corresponding decrease in activity in the area, as will be discussed later in this report. This increase in activity during the Initiative resulted in an increase in both quantity and quality of labour market information products and services.

Conclusions on Improved LMI Products and Services

Evidence presented in this section, and in the previous chapter, demonstrates that there has been improvement in the quality of labour market information and improvement in the products and services to better meet the needs of a diverse range of users. To a lesser extent, there has also been improvement in outcome and student flow information for post-secondary education and training programs. There has also been some increase in the amount and type of community and sector level labour market information.

The evidence presented in this section suggests that the LMI Strategic Initiative has made a significant contribution to:

- improving the quality of labour market information;
- improving outcome and student flow information for post-secondary education and training programs; and
- improving products and services to better meet the needs of a diverse range of users.

In addition, the Initiative has made some contribution to increasing the amount and type of community and sector level labour market information. Its contribution was less significant because it had less activity in these areas.

4.2 Increased Access

To make the resources and products accessible, they have been produced in various mediums, including print, internet, and CD ROM. The *BC WorkInfoNet (BC WIN)* website was created through Initiative funding to provide one place to find labour market information and career development resources in BC. The website has links to many of the resources available in interactive form. The Initiative has also created on-line versions of existing resources, including the youth oriented magazines, *Career Paths* and *Motiv8*. A CD ROM, *Career Gateways: Applying Labour Market Information in a Changing World*, provides many of these resources in an interactive CD ROM format, which is also available at the *BC WIN* site.

Many of the print resources have received wide distribution through the Initiative. Resources such as *Work Futures* and *Work Scene* were distributed free to their target audience, which could include public libraries, local HRCC and Skills Development offices, schools, post-secondary training institutions, and contractors providing employment assistance services to government clients.

To help people locate the LMI resources that will fit their needs, an annotated brochure and poster, *What's Key in Labour Market Information* were developed and distributed widely. The brochure, which includes information on where to obtain the resources, is also available at the *BC WorkInfoNet* website.

To make it easier to find appropriate labour market information, a number of inventories and guides were developed, such as:

- *Career Resources 98*
- *Analyst's and Planner's Guide to LMI Resources in BC*
- *LMI Resources for Post-Secondary Program Planning*
- *Inventory of BC Association Providing Career and Labour Market Information*
- *Training Programs and Courses for Career Practitioners in British Columbia*

To help improve the quality and accessibility of LMI, research papers were commissioned, such as:

- *Accessible LMI for Persons with Disabilities*
- *LMI Quality Standards on the Internet*

The Initiative also worked at improving access by raising awareness of the various resources at community workshops and conferences held by various career practitioners organizations. These events have been used to launch new products, to demonstrate resources and to distribute information about what LMI resources are available and where to get them, such as the *What's Key* brochure.

Users' Views on Improvement in Access to LMI

The findings in Chapter 3 indicate that access to LMI varies considerably. Although the majority found access easy, there were still many who had some difficulty in accessing LMI. Many respondents had relied on an *ad hoc*, hit and miss, process of finding out about what resources were available. As a result, they were not always aware what resources were available, what particular purpose or use each was designed for, and where the resources could be obtained.

Despite these difficulties, access to LMI has improved for the majority of career practitioners, analysts and planners. Career practitioners also felt that access had improved for their clients. The most common reasons for the improvement offered by respondents was the use of the internet to access LMI and the increase in the number of different resources available.

The various inventories and resource guides did not appear to have been well used. They had been used by only about half the contractors, field personnel, analysts and planners. Views on their usefulness were mixed, although many respondents were not able to rate their usefulness.

The Initiative's Contribution

Those involved in the Initiative were asked what contribution, if any, the Initiative had made to the improved access to LMI that users had reported. Twelve percent did not know, but the rest felt that the Initiative had made a contribution to the improved access. Sixty-five percent felt that the contribution was substantial. The *BC WorkInfoNet* website was a frequently cited example of the Initiative's contribution to improved access, as was the *What's Key* brochure.

The Initiative put a lot of its focus on making LMI resources available through the internet. To maximize the usefulness of using the internet to find LMI, the Initiative funded the creation of the *BC WorkInfoNet* website. This website provides an access to point by providing links to various other sites with LMI, as well as providing LMI resources directly on the site. This strategy has been effective. Use of the internet has grown at a tremendous pace since the project began. As was presented in the previous chapter, access to the internet was high among respondents. Most professionals had adequate access at work, with the exception of some teachers, and to a lesser extent, some contractors and counselors. Even the majority of end-users had adequate access to the internet. The only exception was for government clients, who were generally unemployed. Only about one-half felt they had adequate access to the internet. Even with this group though, a high proportion (about 40 percent) had internet access at their own home.

Although some respondents were not comfortable using the internet, and some had not had the time to get comfortable using it, the majority of respondents used the internet and appeared to be happy with the availability of LMI on the internet.

The Initiative had also tried to make resources available in other mediums. Most resources are available in print for those who do not have adequate internet access, or prefer a printed version. A few CD ROMs had also been created. These resources had not been well used, perhaps because they had been created near the end of the Initiative and so were not yet well known when data was collected for this evaluation. Technology may also be a reason for the lower use. Based on the comments made during interviews, it appears that more respondents had internet access than had CD ROM drives.

The Initiative had only begun to examine the issue of access for people with disabilities through a series of research papers. Resources were not provided in alternative formats for people with disabilities. For people who are blind, the print resource must be scanned into the computer so that it can be read by speech software. The use of the internet avoids the need to scan the printed resource, but there are problems using the internet due to all the graphics, which cannot be easily handled by speech software.

Conclusions on Increased Access

The LMI Strategic Initiative has increased availability of labour market information resources to meet the needs of a diverse range of users, by:

- producing resources in a variety of formats;
- creating different resources to make LMI accessible to different users;
- promoting the resources to audiences of career practitioners and other users;
- making the resources available on the internet through one site, the *BC WorkInfoNet* website; and
- distributing the resources free of charge to a wide audience of intended users.

The improved availability has improved access to LMI resources for intended users. None the less, users still experience some difficulties in accessing LMI resources because they lack information about some of the resources, how to obtain them and how they can be used effectively. Barriers to access still exist for people with disabilities.

4.3 Enhanced Coordination

A number of outcomes have a bearing on whether the Initiative enhanced coordination in the development, production and dissemination of labour market information. This section reviews whether the Initiative has:

- provided effective communication to ensure those involved and other producers of LMI were informed about activities and plans of the Initiative;
- facilitated cooperation and collaboration and established effective partnerships for the collection and dissemination of LMI; and
- avoided duplication in the collection and dissemination of LMI.

The LMI Strategic Initiative itself was a federal-provincial partnership. An effective partnership requires effective communication, and the ability to coordinate activities and collaborate on achieving objectives and goals. The implementation of the Initiative took the partnership concept further by setting up its activities and delivery processes to involve both those who collect and/or disseminate LMI and well as career practitioners, the primary audience for the resources produced by the Initiative. The people involved were from the BC Yukon Regional office of HRDC, some of the HRCCs in BC, different branches of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and other provincial ministries and agencies, and career practitioners from the field. People were involved in carrying out projects, sitting on advisory committees to oversee projects, sitting on steering committees to set priorities for activities of one of the components of the Initiative, and sitting on the Joint Committee for Enhanced LMI, to oversee the entire Initiative. In addition, a joint committee was established to work with the Assessment, Counselling and Referral (ACR) Strategic Initiative to ensure the LMI needs of the ACR Strategic Initiative were identified and addressed.

The Initiative was very active, with many projects under way at the same time. Usually projects had at least a project steering committee, and some involved an advisory

committee or a number of working groups as well. Hence, there was a lot of information to communicate and a lot of people to whom the information could be communicated.

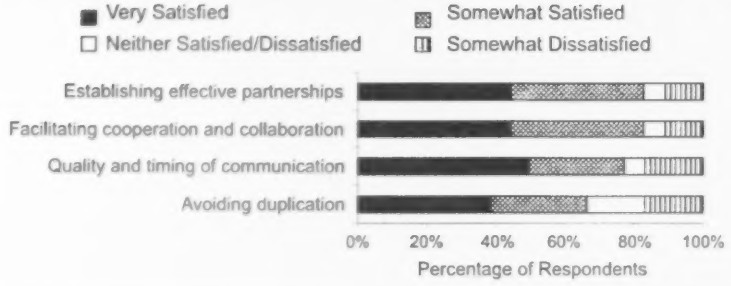
The primary communication vehicle among those involved was participation in meetings, conference calls and personal communication. Minutes of sub-committees were recorded and distributed to members of the committee. The Initiative produced a newsletter describing its activities; five issues were released throughout the duration of the Initiative. A newsletter was put out by the *BC WorkInfoNet Society*, called *Connections*, which focused on the activities of *BC WorkInfoNet*. Both newsletters were produced in print and internet formats. In addition, a web page was developed for information on the Initiative, which provided highlights of some of the Initiative's activities, as well as minutes of meetings, project listings, and evaluation reports.

Views on Communication and Coordination

Those involved in the Initiative where asked whether they were satisfied with various aspects of communication and coordination. These ratings are provided in Figure 4.6. The majority were satisfied that the Initiative had established effective partnerships, facilitated cooperation and collaboration and had provided effective and timely communication. To a slightly lesser extent, the respondents were satisfied that the Initiative had avoided duplication. There were a few who were concerned that the efforts of the Initiative were being duplicated by other endeavors after the Initiative ended, especially outside of BC.

Many of the respondents in the analysts and planners group had some role in the collection and dissemination of labour market information. That is why many were involved in the Initiative. All analysts and planners where asked whether there had been improvement in the amount of collaboration and coordination in the collection and dissemination of LMI. Overall, about one-quarter did not know, but of those who did, virtually all felt there had been improvement. About two-thirds felt that this improvement had been moderate to substantial.

FIGURE 4.6
Satisfaction of with Effectiveness of Communication and Coordination
Views of Analysts and Planners Involved in the Initiative



Conclusions on Enhanced Coordination

The Initiative has:

- provided effective communication to ensure those involved and other producers of LMI were informed about the Initiative's activities and plans;
- facilitated cooperation and collaboration and established effective partnerships for the collection and dissemination of LMI; and
- avoided duplication in the collection and dissemination of LMI.

Hence, we can conclude that the Initiative enhanced coordination in the development, production and dissemination of labour market information. As discussed in the next chapter, the Initiative's effectiveness in establishing partnerships is viewed as one of its key benefits.

4.4 Increased Integration of LMI into Career Planning

Increasing the integration of labour market information into career planning and decision making consists of more than developing and disseminating LMI resources. It also involves making sure intended users know how to use the resources. To help users make effective use of the resources, various training manuals and facilitator's guides were created by the Initiative, including:

- *Making Career Sense of LMI,* manual and facilitator's guide
- Facilitator's Guide to: *A Guide to the BC Economy and Labour Market*
- Facilitator's Guide to: *Work Futures*
- *Career Paths,* facilitator's guide

The Initiative also provided training on how to use LMI. Training using the *Making Career Sense of LMI* manual and facilitator's guide was delivered in various locations in the province. Workshops were held around the province to provide an overview of some of the resources and some training on their use. Training was delivered on the use of the *Virtual LMI Toolkit* CD ROM to teachers around the province.

Views on Training in Effective Use of LMI

Career practitioners were asked about what training they had received on using LMI. About one-half of the teachers and contractors had received some training and about three-quarters of the post-secondary counselors and field personnel had. Satisfaction with training varied. About 80 percent of teachers and 70 percent of contractors were satisfied with the training they had received, compared with about 60 percent of counselors and field personnel.

Career practitioners were also asked whether there had been any changes in access to training, or in the quality and relevance of the training in the use of LMI. These views are shown in Figures 4.7 and 4.8. About one-half of the respondents felt there had been improvement in access to, and quality and relevance of, training. Most based this on their own experience with training. A very high proportion (ranging from 20 to 50 percent) could not answer the questions, however.

FIGURE 4.7
Changes in Access to Training on LMI
Views of Career Practitioners

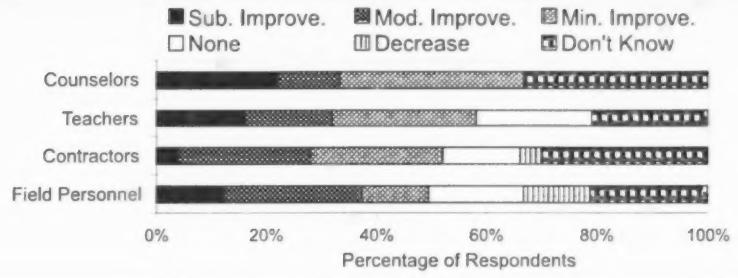
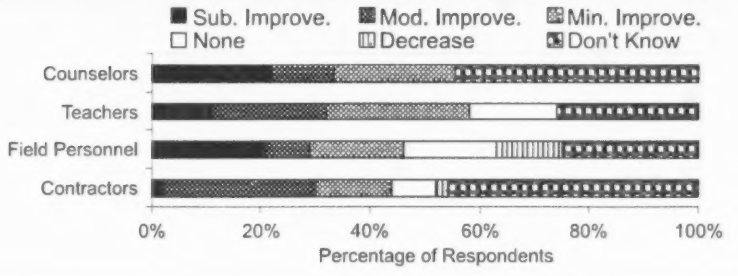


FIGURE 4.8
Changes in Quality and Relevance of Training
Views of Career Practitioners



Analysts and planners were also asked about training. They were asked whether various aspects of training had changed. A very high proportion (ranging from one-third to about 85 percent, depending on the question) could not answer the questions. Those that could answer had noticed a moderate or substantial improvement in:

- understanding the training needs of career practitioners with respect to LMI;
- access to training on the use of LMI; and
- the quality and relevance of training.

Analysts and program planners also noticed an improvement in the capacity for coordination and delivery of training, although to a lesser extent than for the other three

items. The examples they offered of improved training were almost all due to the activities of the Initiative. The primary examples were the community workshops, the *Making Career Sense of LMI* training, and training on the *Virtual LMI Toolkit*.

Those involved in the Initiative felt that the Initiative had made a moderate or substantial contribution to these improvements. In particular, they felt that the Initiative had made a substantial contribution to understanding the training needs of career practitioners with respect to LMI because the Initiative had partnered with career practitioners and involved them on advisory and steering committees.

Views on Integration of LMI into Career Planning

To determine whether LMI was being integrated in career planning, as well as in other types of decision making, all career practitioners, analysts and planners were asked whether there had been changes in:

- the effective use of LMI in individual career planning and decision making;
- government and educational institution decision making and program planning to meet labour market needs; and
- functioning of the labour market.

Figure 4.9 shows the views on individual career planning. The majority (ranging from 60 to 90 percent) felt that there had been improvement in the use of LMI for individual career planning and from about 40 to 70 percent felt the improvement had been moderate or substantial. In addition, secondary school teachers felt there had been an increased use of labour market information to assist students with career planning and decision making. In their opinion, this was primarily due to the incorporation of LMI into the Career and Personal Planning curriculum and the availability of resources to do this.

FIGURE 4.9
Changes in Use of LMI in Individual Career Planning
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners

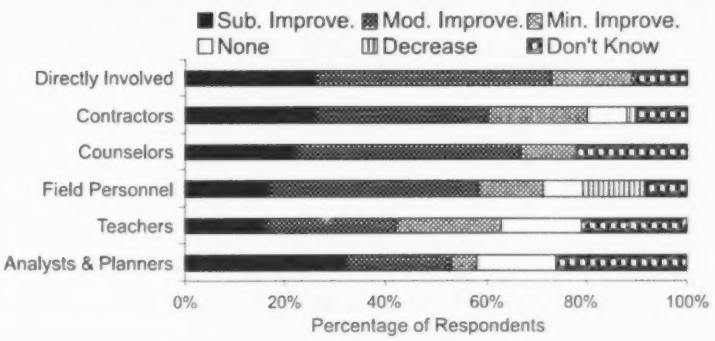


Figure 4.10 shows the views on decision making by government and educational institutions. A high proportion (ranging from 5 to 45 percent) felt they could not answer this question. The majority (ranging from 65 to 80 percent) of those involved in the Initiative, contractors and field personnel felt there had been at least minimal improvement, as did about one-half of the other analysts, planners, teachers and counselors.

FIGURE 4.10
Changes in Decision Making by Government and Educational Institutions
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners

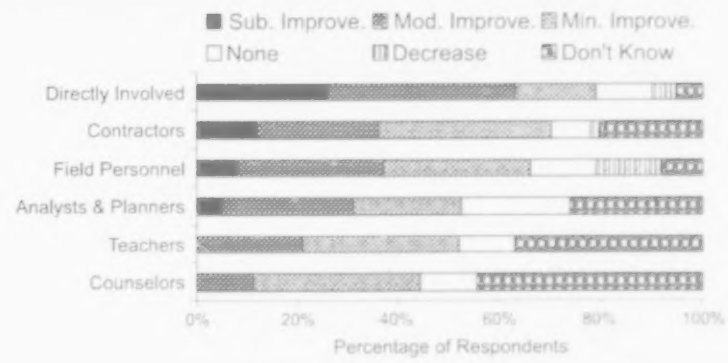
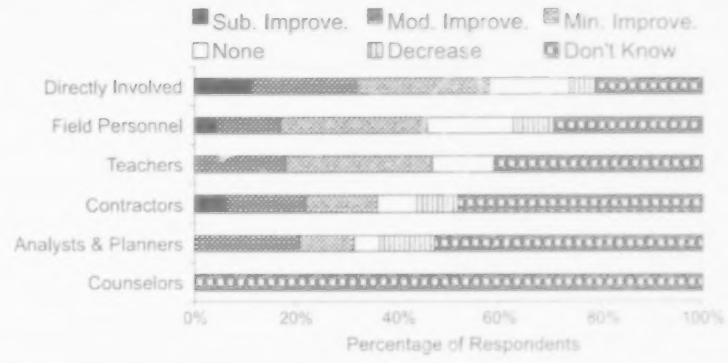


Figure 4.11 presents the views on functioning of the labour market. A very high proportion of respondents, ranging from 20 percent of those involved to 100 percent of counselors, could not answer this question. Of those who did answer, most felt there had been at least a minimal improvement. This was based on the assumption that if individuals are doing better career planning that is more relevant to labour market needs, there should be a better fit between labour market supply and demand.

FIGURE 4.11
Changes in Functioning of the Labour Market
Views of Career Practitioners, Analysts and Planners

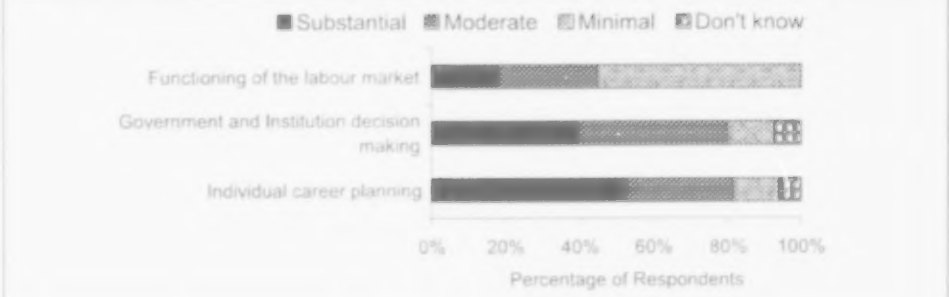


Those involved in the Initiative were also asked whether the Initiative had contributed to any improvement in:

- the effective use of LMI in individual career planning and decision making;
- government and educational institution decision making and program planning to meet labour market needs; and
- functioning of the labour market.

Their views are presented in Figure 4.12. Almost all respondents felt that the Initiative had made a contribution to all three items. About 80 percent felt that the Initiative had made a moderate or substantial increase in effective use of LMI in individual career planning and improved government and educational institution decision making and program planning to meet labour market needs. About one-half felt that the Initiative's contribution to improved functioning of the labour market was minimal.

FIGURE 4.12
The Initiative's Contribution to Improvement in Effective Use of LMI
Views of Analysts and Planners Involved in the Initiative



Conclusions on Increased integration of LMI into Career Planning

Some of the people interviewed discussed a paradigm shift regarding the use of labour market information. Career practitioners and program planners are using labour market information more now than they were a few years ago. This change has come about for a variety of reasons. More LMI resources are available now than ever before. This increase in quantity has been accompanied by an increase in quality. There is better information for use in career planning, and for use in program planning. Career practitioners and program planners are more aware of labour market information and its potential uses. They are more aware of the potential benefits of using labour market information and have experienced an increase in demand for its use. Many have received training in the use of LMI, and even more have received LMI resources.

These changes have come about during the course of the LMI Strategic Initiative. That is not to say that they were all caused by the Initiative, however. The increased recognition of the value of labour market information may have occurred even without the Initiative.

since changes in the labour market have focused attention on this issue. It is clear, though, that the activities of the LMI Strategic Initiative have been directly relevant to this changing paradigm. By producing relevant resources, and ensuring that people had access to the resources and training in their use, the Initiative has helped facilitate this shift.

By involving a wide range of career practitioners and program planners in its activities, the Initiative has been able to be responsive to the needs that this paradigm shift has created. The partnering has resulted in a variety of approaches to addressing these needs.

Through its activities, the Initiative has contributed to:

- increased understanding of long-term training needs around labour market information for career development;
- improved quality of training on labour market information for career practitioners;
- enhanced capacity for coordination and delivery of training in appropriate use of LMI; and
- increased access to relevant training on the use of labour market information for career practitioners.

As a result, more people know how to use labour market information and more are using it in career planning and program planning.

By contributing to the increase in the number of relevant LMI resources for career planning, and by contributing to the increased awareness and understanding of the value of using labour market information, the Initiative has contributed to increasing the integration of labour market information into career planning and decision making.

5. Overall Impacts and Conclusions

This chapter presents the findings on the few remaining issues that pertain to the overall impacts of the Initiative and its sustainability, as well as findings on the cost effectiveness of the delivery of the Initiative. Also included are highlights of the lessons that were learned from the activities of the Initiative and a summary of the key findings and conclusions. The chapter ends with overall conclusions about the effectiveness of the LMI Strategic Initiative.

5.1 Overall Impacts, Sustainability and Cost Effectiveness

Overall Benefits and Disadvantages

People who had been involved in the Initiative were asked what they felt had been its most important benefits. The most obvious benefit of the LMI Strategic Initiative was the range of useful resources it created. This was seen as the most important benefit by about two-thirds of the respondents. However, about one-half identified partnerships as either the most important benefit, or just as important as the resources created. Because of the way the Initiative carried out its activities, people involved learned the value of working together collaboratively. This included federal and provincial personnel, as well as representatives from different career practitioner organizations, and career practitioners working in the field. This collaboration brought a broad perspective to the Initiative, increasing knowledge about the needs of various groups. It also resulted in end products that were aimed at more than one audience or one need. And it left a legacy of people who not only know how to work collaboratively, but they also know the benefits of doing so.
The people involved in the Initiative were also asked whether there were any significant disadvantages of the Initiative. Only one theme emerged from the responses. About two-thirds were concerned that the sustainability of the activities of the Initiative had not been provided for at the beginning. They were concerned that the Initiative had raised expectations without the ability to continue to meet them.

Sustainability of Benefits

People who had been involved in the Initiative were also asked to consider what benefits, if any, would continue after the Initiative ended. Two-thirds felt that benefits would continue. Working in partnership was the benefit that about half expected would continue. Other benefits that were expected to continue were the awareness of the values of LMI, and the continued demand for more LMI resources to meet the needs that were addressed in the Initiative.

The remaining one-third of respondents were not sure whether benefits would continue, although they did identify partnerships as a benefit with the potential to continue. They were uncertain because they were aware of barriers to the continuation of partnerships, as were some of the other respondents who had identified partnerships as a benefit that

would continue. The barriers that might inhibit the continuation of partnerships that respondents identified are:

- Lack of funding. The LMI Strategic Initiative provided funding, which made it possible for the various partners to work together. Partnerships need a purpose. Without funding, there will be no purpose in working together because there will be no activities to work on. Some partners were able to bring funding to the partnership, but many, particularly the not-for-profit associations of career practitioners, do not have a source of funds to draw upon. Without funding, the career practitioners' organizations cannot participate in activities in the way they did during the Initiative.

- Uncertainty over roles relating to LMI. The LMI Strategic Initiative defined the roles of the federal and provincial governments and provided a forum for working together. With the end of the Initiative, uncertainty exists regarding the roles of the federal and provincial governments with respect to the collection and dissemination of labour market information under the Labour Market Development Agreement. This uncertainty also affects funding of new work, including updating existing resources, and the development of new resources and hence, has delayed activity.

- Limited time of partners. For most people, their role in the Initiative was carried out "on the side of their desk," as it was not part of their job function, or was only indirectly so. This is not a sustainable way to operate. For partnerships to continue, labour market information will have to move closer to the centre of people's desks. That is, involvement in the collection, production or dissemination of labour market information will have to become part of the job function. However, many people already have more responsibilities than they can handle in the time available. Effective partnerships cannot happen if responsibility for LMI is just added to an already full work load.

Cost Effectiveness

There are two issues pertaining to cost effectiveness that were addressed in the evaluation:

- Was the Initiative a cost-effective method of achieving its objectives?
- Has the Initiative identified potentially significant economies or efficiencies in the development, production and dissemination of LMI?

To address the first issue, respondents who had been involved in the Initiative were asked about the cost effectiveness of the Initiative. Many found this a difficult issue to address. One of the purposes of all the Strategic Initiative programs was to be innovative and to experiment with imaginative approaches. Hence, many of the activities of the Initiative were innovative or experimental in nature. Being innovative means there is nothing available for comparison. It also means the people are often doing things they have not done before. Some trial and error may be necessary in working out the best approach to a project. This will take additional time, and often money. It can, therefore, be difficult to be both innovative and cost effective.

Many of the people involved in carrying out the individual projects had never worked on a project of this nature before. As well as lacking experience in designing and managing projects like this, they did not know what costs to expect and could not budget accordingly. Others had experience but were doing something innovative, so did not have the knowledge that was needed for accurate costing. A number of the projects profiled in Chapter 2 illustrate these issues.

Some respondents were able to identify ways in which the Initiative was cost effective. Working in partnerships was often cost effective because the partners could share costs. In some cases, partners were able to supply funding to supplement the funds from the Initiative. Partners also donated in-kind support to projects, sometimes in the form of the use of technology, such as providing free use of a server for a website, or by donating their time to the project. Many of the community partnerships demonstrate both in-kind and financial contributions to projects. Partnerships can be cost effective also by avoiding duplication and by developing one resource that can meet the needs of more than one audience. *Work Futures* and *BC WorkInfoNet* are two examples. In addition, partnerships made it possible for people to share their knowledge and expertise, some of it gained through work on previous projects.

The experience gained through working on the Initiative means that future work of this type can be done in a more cost-effective way. Initial costs, such as the design of *Work Futures* and the editing tool created for it, have been absorbed by the Initiative. Future updates of the resource will not be as costly. Even new products could potentially benefit from this experience because people will have acquired knowledge that will help them budget effectively in areas such as size of print runs that will be required, costs of printing, and costs of various alternatives such as producing CD ROMs.

The partnership model can yield significant economies of scale or efficiencies in the development, production and dissemination of LMI. A number of instances of cost-effective delivery are illustrated in the projects profiled for the case studies. However, given the available information and the innovative and experimental nature of much of the Initiative's activities, no overall conclusion on whether the Initiative was a cost-effective method of achieving its objectives is possible.

5.2 Lessons Learned

As a Strategic Initiatives Program, the LMI Strategic Initiative was to test and evaluate innovative and cost-effective ways of addressing its objectives to learn what works and what doesn't. The Initiative has indeed been innovative. And lessons have been learned in the process. Through this evaluation some of these lessons have been captured. Chapter 2 provides a synthesis of the lessons learned from individual projects that were profiled for the case studies. The individual lessons will not be repeated here.

One of the key lessons of the Initiative as a whole was the value of working in partnership. The value of partnerships was frequently mentioned by respondents when citing benefits

of the Initiative or lessons learned from carrying out individual projects. A number of benefits of working in partnership were identified by respondents, including:

- improved understanding of the needs of users;
- more cost-effective approaches to addressing needs;
- reduced overlap or duplication with other projects;
- sharing of resources, either in-kind or financial;
- sharing of knowledge about collecting, producing and disseminating labour market information; and
- creation of more user-friendly LMI resources.

Another benefit is that working in partnership is one way that lessons learned from other projects can be shared with other collectors, producers or disseminators of labour market information. Another lesson about partnerships is the benefit that can be achieved with a relatively small amount of funding through the cooperation and dedication of those involved. None the less, some funding is needed for partnerships to happen. Partnerships only exist to achieve some end and money is needed to do this. With the completion of the LMI Strategic Initiative, money for carrying out LMI projects has been greatly reduced, and with the reduction in funding has come a concomitant reduction in the amount of partnering occurring in this area.

Other key lessons learned through the activities of the LMI Strategic Initiative are summarized below.

- There is a receptive and even enthusiastic audience for appropriate LMI resources that address their specific needs for labour market information.

- Free and widespread distribution of a resource improves the chance that it will be used by the intended audience. Free distribution raises awareness of the resource and ensures that intended users have the resource, thus avoiding problems due to inadequate budgets for LMI resources, or lack of knowledge or time to find the resource.

- The internet is a highly effective method of disseminating labour market information, LMI resources, and information about what LMI resources are available and where to get them. A large, and growing, segment of the audience for LMI has enthusiastically embraced the internet as a source for LMI.

- Appropriate distribution of a resource may not be enough to ensure that a product gets used. Promotion is needed to ensure that potential users know about the product, and about how it can be used. Lack of time can hamper people's ability to use the resource because they don't have time to learn how to use it. Providing in-service or training on specific resources has been one method used in some of the projects of the Initiative to ensure that potential users take the time to learn how to use them.

- Distribution and promotion of each resource needs to be considered at the beginning of a project. In some cases, there was confusion over responsibilities for distribution and

promotion between the funders and the recipients of funding. People involved in carrying out projects did not always have the necessary knowledge to carry out effective distribution and promotion and project budgets did not always allow for distribution or promotion. As a consequence, some potentially useful products have not received adequate attention because of lack of promotion and/or inadequate distribution.

- Projects with a technical component, such as creating a CD ROM or a website, or creating an interactive, on-line application, can be implemented more efficiently when the technical people are brought in at the beginning of the design phase. This can ensure that the design being considered is technically feasible, and can be done within the budget available. Those designing the project can learn about the trade-offs that will need to be made, and can be informed of the consequences of various approaches. In addition, the technical people can gain a better understanding of the concept that the designers are trying to achieve.

- The potential benefits of a successful project are not fully realized when the project cannot be sustained. Since projects funded through the Initiative were conceptualized as pilots, funding of projects was not contingent on the ability of projects to be maintained after funding ended. However, the success of the Initiative means that there are a number of projects, some at the local level and some at the provincial level, that were successful. Successful projects set up expectations among users and those who carried out the project. In the case of websites, users expect the site to remain functional. Many users have come to rely on resources like *Work Futures*, and expect that they will be kept up-to-date so that they will continue to meet their needs. People who carried out the project often put a lot of time into it, and are frustrated when they can't maintain a website, or market a resource.

Every project funded by the Initiative was in some sense a pilot project. Some have gone on to become ongoing projects. Some were successful, but have ended. Others were failures, in that the goals of the project were not achieved. Even failures can provide valuable lessons about what doesn't work and hence, make a contribution to the objectives of the Initiative. In fact, it is likely that more lessons were learned from the challenges faced in carrying-out projects, whether or not the challenges were overcome. The most successful projects were not necessarily without challenges, but they were able to effectively overcome the challenges that arose.

Through the case studies, one can see that a variety of lessons have been learned about collecting, producing and disseminating labour market information. Unfortunately, there is no forum for collecting and disseminating these lessons, except through this evaluation. The resources for this evaluation did not allow for profiles to be created for all funded projects due to the considerable amount of research that was needed to collect the information for each profile. As a consequence, any lessons learned from the projects not profiled are known only among those who were involved and learned the lesson first hand. These lessons are not available to benefits others. This points to a limitation of this evaluation, as well as to a limitation in the reporting requirements for funded projects, in

that there was no requirement for final reports for each project that captured the necessary information about what worked and what didn't, as well as reasons why projects were not able to achieve their goals. Only through continued partnering is there a mechanism to ensure that these lessons are shared in a meaningful way with others who can benefit from them.

5.3 Summary of Key Findings and Conclusions

The LMI Strategic Initiative resulted in the creation and dissemination of a wealth of LMI resources, in both print and electronic form. To encourage the effective use of these resources, it developed facilitator's guides and provided workshops and training on the use of a number of LMI resources. To improve the capacity for the collection of local or sector LMI, and the development and dissemination of LMI resources, the Initiative funded a number of pilot projects in communities throughout BC, that resulted in other resources.

The Initiative made LMI resources available to their intended audiences by widespread distribution of free print copies, and by creating internet or CD ROM versions of a number of resources. In addition, the Initiative established the *BC WorkInfoNet* website, which provides links to a wide range of LMI resources, including ones created by the Initiative as well as many others.

Among all the activities of the Initiative, and all the products and resources created, four stand out as key resources because they address the needs of a broad range of users: *Work Futures*, the *BC WorkInfoNet* website, *Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information* and *A Guide to the BC Economy and Labour Market*. It is noteworthy that all four were produced early in the course of the Initiative. Resources produced near the end of the Initiative may, or may not, turn out to be just as useful, but at the time of this evaluation they were not in widespread use. It may be that time was the issue. Before people can make effective use of a new resource, they need to spend some time learning how to use it. But lack of time was an issue for many respondents, who felt they did not have time to learn how to use the resources.

The objective of the LMI Strategic Initiative was: *"To answer the need for the development, production and distribution of high-quality job and career-related labour market information and, particularly, its integration into career counselling in secondary and post-secondary educational settings, in order to support the school-to-work transition"*.[5] The LMI Strategic Initiative addressed this objective by:

- improving labour market information products and services to better meet the needs of a diverse range of users;
- increasing access to labour market information resources that meet the needs of a diverse range of users;
- enhancing coordination in the development, production and dissemination of labour market information; and

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5 *Cooperation Agreement Concerning the Labour Market Components of the Canada/British Columbia Strategic Initiatives*, Schedule C, 1995.

- increasing integration of labour market information into career planning and decision making.

Although the objective specifically identifies the secondary and post-secondary school audiences, the focus of the LMI Strategic Initiative was broader than this to encompass the entire career-planning audience, including government clients on employment insurance or income assistance and the career practitioners who provide support to them as they strive to integrate, or reintegrate, into the labour market. The Initiative had an impact on all these audiences, but its greatest impact was on the career practitioners who provide support to government clients. The Initiative was less effective in addressing the needs of the secondary school audience. Teachers, who were less likely than other career practitioners to use LMI, were more likely to have difficulty accessing LMI and less likely to have access to the internet. They were also less likely to feel that resources met their needs. Contractors and counselors, on the other hand, who were more likely to use LMI, were less likely to have difficulty in accessing LMI and were more likely to have access to the internet. Compared with teachers, contractors were much more likely to feel that LMI resources met their needs, and counselors were somewhat more likely to feel this way.

5.4 Overall Conclusions

During the course of the LMI Strategic Initiative, a paradigm shift occurred regarding the use of labour market information. More than ever before, career practitioners and program planners were using labour market information. At the end of the Initiative, there were more and better quality LMI resources than there had been when the Initiative began. Many of these resources were the work of the Initiative, in whole or in part.

Because of the increasing concern with labour market issues, some of the activity of the Initiative, and the resulting LMI resources, may have occurred even if the Initiative had not happened. While there is no way to know how much would have occurred, the Initiative did, however, provide a forum for this activity, and for partners to work together to address the need for better LMI for career planning purposes. The Initiative also provided funding that made it possible to significantly increase the level of activity in this area compared with before the Initiative.

By partnering with, and involving, a wide range of career practitioners and program planners in its activities, the Initiative was responsive to the needs resulting from the paradigm shift. By increasing the number of relevant LMI resources for career planning, and increasing awareness and understanding of the value of using labour market information, the Initiative contributed to increasing the integration of labour market information into career planning and decision making.

Although there is a greater recognition of the value of LMI now, the paradigm shift is not complete. More work is needed toward raising awareness and teaching the value of using labour market information in career planning and program planning, and toward informing intended users about what LMI resources are available. Even once the shift is complete, and the need for labour market information in career planning and program

planning is accepted by all, work will need to continue in order to continue to meet this need.

Lack of time is a factor that limits how quickly this shift can occur. Those who are not experienced with labour market information need to take time to learn about it and its uses. They need to know what resources are available to address their needs, and how to make effective use of these resources. This takes time, which is limited for many. Many intended users find it difficult to find the time to learn something new and hence, some are behind others in their facility with using labour market information.

Although the LMI Strategic Initiative has been effective in improving the quality of labour market information, there is a continued need for work in this area. Labour market information is timely information and becomes outdated relatively quickly. There is the danger that if resources used for career planning are not kept up-to-date, people will end up making ill-informed decisions. The potential damage will depend on how much the labour market has changed since the resources were developed. For specific sectors that have experienced a lot of change, either growth or decline, the result of using out-dated resources could be a reduction in effective functioning of the labour market. People could end up making career decisions that are not consistent with the changes in the labour market, resulting in higher unemployment, and/or skills shortages in the labour force.

In addition to the need to keep LMI resources up-to-date, there are needs that the LMI Strategic Initiative was not able to address. In particular, the needs of people with disabilities for accessible and relevant labour market information. Occupational information is also needed for people with low levels of education.

As a means of improving the functioning of the labour market, labour market information is serving a public good. One benefit of the Initiative is that it was able to fund the free distribution of many of the resources. This is likely an important factor in the Initiative's effectiveness, as about half the people in the intended audiences do not have adequate budgets to meet their LMI needs. Lack of budget was not a limiting factor for these people because of the widespread free distribution of the resources, both in print and electronically. The ending of the Initiative has meant that there is less funding for the creation and dissemination of LMI resources.

Since audiences do not have enough money to purchase the LMI resources they need, the collection and dissemination of LMI cannot be self-sufficient. To continue to address the LMI needs of career practitioners and end-users, and encourage the further integration of LMI into career planning, continued government funding is needed for the collection, development and dissemination of LMI, and training in its use.

The principal benefits of the LMI Strategic Initiative have been the development of effective partnerships for the collection, development and dissemination of LMI resources and the creation of LMI resources that meet the needs of a diverse range of users. The needs are ongoing, but the shelf life of LMI resources is not. Work on updating resources and developing new resources will have to continue if the needs of users are to continue to be met. Whether the significant benefits that the LMI Strategic Initiative has achieved will be sustained depends on the availability of government funding to continue work in this area.